

**The Persistent Metaphor :
Gender in the Representations of the Cairene House by Edward W. Lane and Hassan Fathy**

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 7, 1993
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Architecture Studies

ABSTRACT

This thesis is developed as a critical study of the representations of the Cairene house in the contexts of colonial and post-colonial times. Based on the observation that the introverted image of the house remains constant over the two eras, it explores the underlying cultural agendas in relation to the issue of gender segregation in the Cairene house. The two canonical representations of the house in their respective times ; by Edward W. Lane in mid 19th-century and by Hassan Fathy in mid and late 20th-century, defined the Cairene house with constant thematic focus on its introverted character. This inwardness is inextricably related with the social practice of separation of genders in the Cairene society which was addressed in both representations in varying degrees.

In colonial representation, the focus on the introverted character of the Cairene house became a venue for commenting on the social practice of subjugating woman in the Cairene society. Certain selected type of urban residences affirmed the colonial thesis of segregation of woman in the house. Thus the representation showed an overt emphasis on harem quarter and its associated architectural and spatial elements. The harem was highlighted to assert the difference between the social norms of the colonized and the colonizing cultures. The Middle Eastern society was thus categorically reduced to a segregative and inferior Other which in reciprocity defined the liberal and superior identity of the colonizing West. The post-colonial representation perpetuated the same introverted image of the Cairene house to establish an Arab identity. This identity is anti-western, which looked for its precedents in examples considered uncontaminated by the western Influence. Climatic and social rationalization established the same interiority as appropriate and contextual. In this reversal of connotation, segregation became privacy.

The anti-colonial rhetoric of identity of the *self* is both a reaction to and a derivation from the colonial representation of the *Other*. The post-colonial search for identity paradoxically ends up in replicating the colonial image of the Cairene house. The post-colonial representation of the Cairene house exploits the traditional and segregated role of woman in the domestic space in establishing an anti-western identity. This speaks of an internal male-female power hierarchy, as Asish Nandy observes, "... the internal colonialism in turn uses the fact of external threat to legitimize and perpetuate itself." Caught in the politics of identity, the representations of the Cairene house affirmed the secluded existence of woman in the society.

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Dedication

To 1971

and

to the young minds on both sides of the Ganges
some were constructing identity
others questioning it

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

The Mythical Image of the Islamic house

*"Mustafa Sa'eed said to them, 'I have come to you as a conqueror'. . . But their own coming too was not a tragedy as we imagine, nor yet a blessing as they imagine. It was a melodramatic act which with the passage of time will change into a mighty myth."*¹

From colonial to post-colonial time, the courtyard house has assumed a mythical value in the representation of architecture of the Middle Eastern countries. Under various labels - Islamic house, Arabo-Islamic house, Cairene house - this image of the introverted house continues to dominate the discourse of domestic architecture in the Middle East. Both in the representations by the 19th-century Western observers and by the 20th-century traditionalist school the introverted house form had been immensely popularized. Supported by a whole collection of travelogues, ethnographic accounts, artistic and architectural representations a closed and introverted image of the Cairene house had been constructed by the 19th century Western observers. In the contemporary discourse on Islamic architecture the same image has been perpetuated by the traditionalist school. Between these two eras, the basic theme of representation remains constant -- the *Islamic* house as the courtyard house.

What seems intriguing in the constancy of definition of the Cairene house is its obvious "naturalness" as opposed to its historicity. It is represented with an assertion of a timeless definition. A definition that tries to transcend the context in which it is constructed. Barthes calls it a "dressed- up reality"², which though supported by truth is also historically constructed. In the process of construction of a myth the intention behind establishing the priorities contradicts the projected "naturalness". Myths are created by intentions, often of establishing or maintaining a power hierarchy. The myth of the timeless Orient is a suitable example which created a logical ground for the colonial rule. It validated the widespread Western colonialism over colonized cultures in the East of the 19-th and early 20-th century. The construction of myth very often engages a whole set of supporting institutions, publications and scholarships. The cultural project of Orientalism supported and paralleled the colonial and imperial rule over the colonized cultures.³ Myths are continuation of some historically constructed images over time. In that sense myths are endowed with a sense of antiquity that

¹ Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* p. 60

² Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* p. 11

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

goes back to a selected past, which conforms to the ideological agenda under which the myths are created.

This thesis tries to situate the two representations of the Cairene house by British ethnographer Edward W. Lane in the mid 19th-century and by noted Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy in the 20th-century in their respective historical contexts. Under the broad historical episodes of colonialism and post-colonialism in Egypt, these two representations offered the canonical definitions of the Cairene house of their eras. Supported by institutions, scholarship and a lineage of successors, Lane and Fathy became the authority on the archetypal image of the Cairene house. In relation to the context of these representations, this thesis attempts to understand the ideological agendas behind establishing the courtyard house as the essential definition of the houses in Cairo. The focus of the analysis is on the implications of the social practice of gender segregation on the two canons of representation of the Cairene houses. What the two representations have in common is the emphasis they placed on the courtyard and the lattice window or *mushrabiya*. Together with other spatial and architectural elements they create the introverted character of the Cairene house. The constant emphasis on these two elements is indicative of the emphasis placed on the interiority of the Cairene house. The theme of interiority continues to define the Cairene house from the colonial to the post-colonial time. In the social and religious context of Egypt, the introverted character of the Cairene house is inextricably associated with the separation of genders. The thematic emphasis on the courtyard and *mushrabiya* is thus also related with the practice of gender separation in the domestic spaces.

Colonial Representation as Power Relationship

*"This Mustafa Saeed does not exist. he is an illusion, a lie."*⁴

Colonial representation can only offer limited interpretations when understood solely in chronological terms - as the historical episodes of Western colonial domination. It can incorporate all representations that occur under *the colonial relationship*, borrowing Albert Memmi's term. According to Memmi, "The colonial relationship. . . chained the colonizer and the colonized into an implacable dependence, molded their respective characters and dictated their conducts."⁵ Though Memmi bases his analysis of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer in the historical context of colonized Tunisia, he opens up the term *colonized* to connote all situation of *subjugation*. In 1965, Memmi's well known publication "The Colonizer and

⁴ Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, p. 32

⁵ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Preface p. ix

the Colonized" was dedicated to the colonized American Negro, and his definition incorporates "other people subjugated in other ways".⁶ The term *colonized* shows wider implication of power relationship. Thus the colonizer and the colonized are bound into a reciprocal relationship of higher and lower order of power. Colonial relationship is one which contains the element of inherently unbalanced yet reciprocal power relationship that goes beyond the East-West boundary and speaks about the ruler-ruled, male-female, white - black power hierarchy in both sides of it.

Colonialism is a historical situation as well as a power relationship. Said develops the concept of *the colonized* to signify the whole range of subjugated and oppressed class, women and national minorities.⁷ The colonial representation operating under such a colonial situation therefore entails locating the colonized into the lower and fixed situation of power. The colonial representation reduces the subject into some accepted stereo type which reciprocally affirms the higher situation of power. Albert Memmi in his chapter, "Mythical Portrait of the Colonized" refers to the construction of the myth of *laziness* in the colonized to establish the dexterity of the colonizer.⁸ Both the stereotype and the associated connotation of inferiority is therefore a priori in the colonial representation. For creating the stereotype the colonial representation focuses on selective aspects which affirms the thesis of power hierarchy between the colonizer and the colonized.

Representation of the colonized didnot end with the end of Western presence in the Third world. In the post-colonial societies, new hierarchies of internal power structures continue to situate the colonized into stereotypically limited roles. The neo-traditional role of woman in the Middle Eastern countries is a contemporary phenomenon which raises the issue of male-female power hierarchy in these societies. If Said's definition of the colonized incorporates woman, the assigning of a stereotypical role alludes to the existence of a neocolonialism - in the form of male-female domination. In the discourse of architecture in Middle Eastern countries the house-woman association affirms the stereotypical role that is assigned to the Muslim woman as the symbol of domesticity. In the persistent use of woman as the metaphor, the representation of the house alludes to the new form of power hierarchy that replaces the colonial structure of dominance.

⁶ *ibid*, p. xi in Preface

⁷ Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors" in *Critical inquiry* Winter 1989. pp.206-207

⁸ Albert Memmi., pp. 79-89

Colonialism and the Politics of Identity

*"Richard said to him, 'All this shows that you cannot manage to live without us. You used to complain about colonialism and when we left you created the legend of neo colonialism. It seems that our presence , in an open or under cover form, is as indispensable to you as air and water' They were not angry: they said such things to each other as they laughed, a stone's throw from the equator, with a bottomless historical chasm separating the two of them."*⁹

The colonial representation as a part of the larger *cultural project* of imperialism had the agenda of establishing the authority over the colonized cultures. Western colonialism established its own structure of representing the Eastern cultures under direct or indirect domination. This structure of colonial representation according to Said, was based on a *politics of identity* which established the superiority of the colonizing culture.¹⁰ The colonized culture was represented as the inferior Other which validated the Western domination. In representing the colonized culture the colonialists defined their own cultural identity in reciprocity focusing on the difference between the West and the East.

In representing the colonized, the exclusive aspects of the society were emphasized which conformed to the colonial thesis of cultural difference. Even the apparently neutral descriptions of the inert artifacts were subjected to this Western agenda of establishing the oppositional and superior identity. When a Western ethnographer documented the details of an artifact from the colonized culture, the representation was intended partly to document details and partly to show how different it was from its Western counterpart. The colonial structure of representation created a clear sense of separation between the colonizer and the colonized. As discussed, this representation also established a power hierarchy where the colonized was assigned a lower status of power. In reciprocity the identity of the colonizer created a *exclusive* identity of the colonized culture.

In the early 20th-century, this exclusive identity of the colonized people became the tool in the hand of the anti-colonial nationalist movements. The separate identity of the subject population once defined by the colonialist served as the binding element to stimulate the mass against the colonial domination. The difference between the East and the West was highlighted, this time by the colonized people themselves to demand an end to the political and economic domination by the Western colonialism. Colonial representation of an inferior Other was subverted to create a homogeneity of self which was instrumental in the anti-colonial struggle. The exclusive identity once established to maintain the dominance over the

⁹ Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, p. 60

¹⁰ Edward said, "Politics of Knowledge" in *Raritan*, Summer 1991.

colonized people by a curious twist of history became a liberating tool to fight and eventually uproot the external colonialism. The demise of external colonialism was not followed by the end of the exclusive anti-Western identity. The post colonial societies in their adoption of the colonial focus of representation tried to retain the exclusive identity while tried to glorify them with the labels of 'culture' and 'tradition'. In many post colonial nations this led to cultural and religious orthodoxy. Edward Said notes,

"... this differentiates 'us' from 'them, almost always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity a rather combative one at that, as we see in the recent "returns' to culture and tradition. . . In the formerly colonized world, these 'returns' have produced varieties of religious and nationalist fundamentalism".¹¹

The identity of the colonized people lost its critical power in post-colonial times when the anti-colonial liberation was separated from a "social consciousness". The exclusive identity only came to serve an existing or novel power hierarchy which replaced the colonial hegemony but kept the exploitative structure intact. The internalization of colonial structure led to certain semblance in representation of Other to the representation of self. However there was the reversal of connotation in this self representation. Symbols which once spoke of the *dreadful secondariness*¹² of the colonized people was appropriated to speak of the "traditional rootedness" of the post colonial culture. These are the exoticities which were once highlighted by the colonial representation. In internalizing the colonial structure gender segregation of the once-colonized cultures came to authenticate the post-colonial traditional identity. With a twist in connotation "segregation" became "privacy".

This thesis attempts to analyze the connotative change of the gender seclusive aspects in the depiction of the Cairene house as it happened in the context of assertion of identity. It is analyzed through a parallel study of two canonical representation of the colonial and the post colonial time - by Edward William Lane and Hassan Fathy. Through a study of the commonality and differences in the two representations this thesis attempts to understand the way the issue of gender segregation had been addressed in the representing the Cairene house from colonial to post-colonial eras.

¹¹ Edward said, *Culture and Imperialism* p. xiii, Preface

¹² See Said in "Representing the Colonized" p. 207

Chapter 2

The Colonial Representation : The Cairene House in Edward W. Lane's Account

*"When she saw me,(Mustafa Sa'eed) she saw a dark twilight like a false dawn. Unlike me she yearned for tropical climes, cruel suns, purple horizon."*¹³

In the 19th-century, the Orient became a geopolitical construct which could be systematically studied and represented by many Western observers. A large number of scholars, writers, painters, ethnographers went to the Orient with the intention of studying and depicting its people, culture and society. The Orient thus became an object of representation viewed from a wide range of disciplinary fields. It varied from apparently *objective* and *scientific* documentation to highly personalized *narration* of the Oriental society and its people. At the one end of the range were the ethnographic accounts, where the authors operated within an definite institutional framework and at the other end, were the literary and artistic works where authors tried to capture the Orient in a highly personalized narrative. Taken together a whole body of representation evolved trying to capture the image of the Orient which Edward Said terms as the *Orientalist* representation.¹⁴

Within the vast array of the *Orientalist* representation certain works assumed seminal importance. Often supported by institutional framework, such representations attempted to give an *authentic* and *comprehensive* picture of the Oriental society. The institutional framework demanded the information to be *objective* and *neutral* in order to be assimilated into a common body of popular scholarship. Paradoxically, in these apparently neutral tradition of representation the cultural bias of the West came to play an important role. This authentic knowledge was turned into a representational inheritance. The knowledge once produced was restructured and reinterpreted by successive generations of scholars. From the initial parent description to the successive representation there was a reduction of documentary vigilance and an increase in the degree of social commentary. The cultural bias became more evident in the later production of knowledge about the Orient. Study of the initial text in relation to the successive ones can be helpful in exposing the cultural bias in the *Orientalist* representations.

The Orient was depicted by concentrating on the selective aspects which showed the difference between the East and the West. The East was categorically reduced to an other of the progressive West. Among other derogatory images, the Orient was projected as an ahistorical

¹³ Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* p. 30

¹⁴ Edward Said in *Orientalism* pp.156-162

and static social entity as opposite and inferior to the progressive West. The apparently neutral Orientalist representation had an inherent structure of selectivity supporting cultural judgment. Caught between this need of neutrality and projection of cultural bias the Orientalist representations show a mixture of elaborate documentation of selective aspects of the society. Certain aspects like the harem and the veil became the representational clichés (Fig.1&2), based on the exoticity of these elements with an underlying intention of making derogatory comments on Oriental society.

Woman and House in the Middle East : 19th-Century Western Representations

The Middle Eastern house, in the 19th-century Western representation, came to be synonymous with the 'harem'. The main focus for representing the house was on the secluded life of the woman in the East. The harem in the Western depiction was viewed as a prison for the Oriental woman. Among wide variations and innumerable examples the theme of 'house as the prison' remained constant. In the realm of representation, the relation between the Oriental woman and the Western observer had always been problematic. The woman and the segregated harem frustrated the Western observer. This psychology behind Western representation is elucidated by Mark Alloula in the "The Colonial Harem", discussing the colonial psychology behind representing the Oriental woman and the harem.¹⁵ Focusing on the 19th century photographic representation of Algerian woman, Alloula observes, "The opaque veil that covers her intimates clearly and simply to the photographer (is) a refusal." and her secluded quarters which conceals her from the outside observers is "deeply fascinating and equally disturbing"¹⁶ As a reaction to the refusal the photographer focuses more on the harem and on the veiled Oriental woman. Such concentration can be seen in the flood of photographic reproductions and post cards from the 19th-century Algeria. Very often shot in a studio with hired models the photographs connoted the house to be a place for captivating woman. The images of the 19th century postcards showing woman behind bars tried to highlight the captive existence of the Eastern woman. The images of woman outside the barred windows reveals the apparently paternalistic colonial attitude towards the Oriental woman.(Fig. 3&4), one which aspired to free the woman from the bond of slavery in the harem.

¹⁵ Mark Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 7 and p. 35



Fig.1 "Ornamented Black Veils" in *Manners and Customs*



Fig 2. "Dress of Egyptian Female Dancers", *Description de l'Egypte*



Fig. 3 "Algerian Types" : Postcard



S. 2 - N° 11 - MAURESQUE CHEZ ELLE

Fig 4. Moorish woman at home

At another level, these representations of the house spoke of the male despotism of the Oriental society that segregated woman from the public spaces. The apparently paternalistic attitude towards the captivity of the woman was directed towards representing the Oriental society as the segregative and despotic *Other* of the liberal West. The concentration on the harem was to give a message of gender subjugation of the Eastern societies. Thus the Oriental house was seen as an artifact which speaks about the secluded existence of the Middle Eastern woman. In both textual and visual representation the house as the architectural manifestation of the seclusion of woman remained a constant theme.

The 19th century Western observer John Reynall Morell , noted about the Algerian houses in 1857:

" The great contrast of Moorish and European houses is a type of their national antagonism. . . whilst our European houses give free access to the light of heaven through large and numerous windows, the Moor gropes about in a perpetual twilight, his walls presenting the appearance of a prison. These two facts are symbolical of the great characteristics of Eastern and Western life, . . . in Oriental life where man has never conceived of a higher association than that of private families in the most imperfect form, through *slavery of woman*, no other dwellings could be expected than the houses uniting the character of castle and dungeon" (Italic added)¹⁷

This inward looking character established the Eastern house as different from the European house. The description of the domestic architecture thus led to the criticism of the Eastern society as being different and *inferior* to the Western societies. The introverted character of the Eastern house spoke about the narrow and unsociable existence of the Eastern people. It established the subjugation of the woman in the secluded house. European travel writer, Edmondo de Amicis¹⁸ wrote about the interior of a Moroccan house in 1877, emphasizing the presence of a black female slave and the seclusion of the female members of the family along with more general remarks on the lack of maintenance of the house interior .Edmondo Amicis writes about Moroccan house,

"We entered by a narrow corridor into a small dark court, but beautiful and filthy as the filthiest house in the ghetto of Alkazar. . . On the opposite side of the court was a black slave girl of about fifteen, having on only sort of chemise . . .most elegant and the most seductive

¹⁷ John Reynall Morell in Algeria 1854 in cited in *Veiled Half Truths*_ pp.94-96

¹⁸ Edmondo de Amicis's book on Constantinople was translated in English from its fifteenth Italian edition . The popularity of Amicis travel descriptions is evident from this fact. Cited in *Veiled Half-Truths* p. 42

female character. . . Looking up, we saw the gallery on the first floor and the parapet of the terrace fringed with woman's head, which instantly disappeared"¹⁹

The description of the house in Amicis thus selectively focused on the indifference of the Moroccan people to the maintenance of their domestic space, the practice of slavery and seclusion of the female members into a separate quarter. The description of the house served as a way of representing selective characteristics of the Moroccan society. Such culturally biased representation focused mainly on the aspects which would speak about inferiority of the house and that of the society by extension. The description of an architectural element like the *mushrabiya* was often extended to make commentary on the personal characteristics of the Eastern people. The generalized characteristic of *the Oriental woman*, captivated in the house was shown to be lazy and devoid of intellectual dimension. As Stanley Poole notes in 1902, ". . . visits to other harems are the brief delight on the ladies of Cairo. . . They have no education whatsoever and cannot understand higher or more intellectual pleasures than those their physical senses can appreciate. . ."²⁰

However there were exceptions to this culturally biased representations of the harem life. Stanley Poole's immediate predecessor, Sophia Poole, presented a different view of the harem quarter in Cairo. Having the advantage of her direct access to the woman's quarters in one of the elite harems, she painted a more positive picture of the life inside harem,

"I was surprised, during my second visit to the hareem of Habib Effendi, to find the ladies, immersed in politics and painfully anxious on account of the difference of opinion which has arisen between the Emperor of Russia and their cousin the Sultan"²¹

The change in the description can be attributed to the female authorship of Sophia Lane Poole. Sophia Poole's description appears more sympathetic to the characteristics of the Oriental women in the harem. However, based on Sophia Poole's direct experience of the harem, latter descriptions of the Oriental house became a way of demonstrating the inactive way of life in the Oriental harems. Further Sophia Poole's own account written as a description for a photographic collection of Cairo, contradicts with her own earlier observation. Sophia Poole's text accompanying Francis Firth's photographic collection shows the contradiction. ". . . the beautiful work which forms the screen of the harem and hides from the public eye what are

¹⁹ Edmondo de Amicis, *Morocco*, pp. 317-318 cited in *Veiled Half-Truths* pp.44-45

²⁰ Stanley Lane Poole, *Story of Cairo*, p.20

²¹ Sophia Lane Poole *The English woman in Egypt* 1844, pp.42-43

termed by the idiom of the country 'the guarded jewels', with the soft divan spread within them (mushrabiya seats)" She described, "the woman are content to watch all that passes in the busy streets even in the silent lane"²²

The wide range of Orientalist representations, with varying degrees of neutrality and biases, however focused on the harem and associated characteristic features of the harem quarter. The importance given to the description of the mushrabiya is an example of such focus. Underlying most of the description was the intention to comment on the derogatory social system of the East. The social commentary on the segregative practice was authenticated by the physical manifestation of domestic architecture. The house became an important subject matter of representation for reflecting on the segregative practices of the Eastern society and its introverted character remained a recurring theme in the 19th century representations of the Middle East.

The Context of the *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*

Published in 1836, Edward William Lane's comprehensive ethnographic work, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* became the seminal text on the Egyptian society. Based on an initial period of residence from 1825-28 in Egypt, Lane compiled his personal observations in a manuscript draft titled, *Description of Egypt*.²³ The difficulty Lane encountered in finding a publisher for his draft was inherent in the subject matter he was looking at. Following prolonged difficulty in publishing his work, Lane in 1833 approached the "Society for the Diffusion of Useful knowledge". With the suggestion of the Society to focus on the popular subject matter of the social life of the Egyptians, Lane made his second voyage to Egypt to look at the societal aspects of Egyptian life. In the preface of *Manners and Customs*, Lane notes the suggestion he received from the Society which outlines his intention behind representation, "... to make some of my countrymen better acquainted with the domiciliated classes. . . by drawing a detailed picture of the inhabitants of the largest Arab city".²⁴ This summarizes the institutional responsibilities bestowed upon him to produce useful knowledge. This type of Orientalism, is defined as the professional Orientalism by Said - documented by scholars, who used their residence in the East to provide objective and scientific knowledge to

²² Text accompanying Francis Firth's *Cairo Senai, Jerusalem and the Pyramids of Egypt - A Series of Sixty Photographic View*

²³ Leila Ahmed, *Edward William Lane* p. 34

²⁴ Edward W. Lane in *Manners and Customs* preface p.iii , written in 1835.

the Western institutions. Similar institutions like the Royal Asiatic Society of England founded in 1823, outlined their main objective as accumulating, "those facts about the Orient that could be relevant to Europe, to those discoveries and works of all kinds of which the Oriental peoples could become the subject"²⁵ This involved conversion of personal observations into neutral description to providing authentic and comprehensive knowledge to the West.

Lane's *Manners and Customs* was published under similar institutional framework, which characterizes his work as oscillating between neutrality and cultural bias. The lineage of representation that Lane created exposes cultural bias as neutral information becomes subject to latter cultural interpretations in the West. The *parent* text of Lane's *Manners and Customs* in relation to the successive representation shows the colonial bias of representation. Once recorded in meticulous details, the exoticity of the East became the subject of repeated interpretations. In this succession, the East became a frozen image of inferiority which in reciprocity define the identity of the colonizing culture. Lane's work was followed up by a line of successors, the most immediate one being Sophia Poole's account, *The English Woman in Egypt* published in 1845. Stanley Lane Poole as a prominent successor of Lane's published *Story of Cairo* in 1902 closely following Lane's description of the Cairene society. This created an inheritance of representation about the Cairene house in the 19th and early 20th century. Together they form the body of texts which created and recreated the image of the Cairene house in the West.

The first edition of Edward Lane's *Manners and Customs* in 1836 was followed by a number of publications. Early in 1837, it was reprinted in a limited edition under the Society of Useful Knowledge. The same year a cheap edition of the text was published in the series of "The Library for Entertaining Knowledge" followed by two successive editions in 1842 and 1847.²⁶ The immense success of *Manners and Customs* is an indicator of the growing interest in the West about the Eastern culture, society and the inhabitants. The Society of Useful knowledge published another popular account titled *The Chinese: A Description of the Empire of China and its inhabitants* by J. F. Davies, under their series of "The Library of Useful Knowledge" in 1836.²⁷ Another prominent account of this period is *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* by Abbe J. A. Dubois, translated from French in Britain in 1899.²⁸ These publications indicate the popularity of the ethnographic accounts of the Far and Middle Eastern peoples in the West, the context under which Lane's account was published.

²⁵ Cited in *Orientalism*, p. 165, Quoted from the "Centenary Volume of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland", 1823-1923.

²⁶ Leila Ahmed, *Edward W. Lane* in foot note no.44. p. 152

²⁷ *ibid.* p.112

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 106

The reviews Lane received, following the publication of his book, indicate the widespread acceptance and popularity of the subject matter of his account. One reviewer commented immediately after the publication of Lane's account, "This is a work of altogether startling character, whether as regards to the value of information ; It is happy combination of learned investigation and popular amusement"²⁹ Edward W. Lane in order to conform to the popular demand, focused on the selective aspects of the Egyptian society - of which as discussed before harem and woman of the Middle East was one of the main focus. The institutional demand of neutrality is evident in the detailed manner of representation while the choice of subject matter clearly shows the selectivity. The concentration on woman's dress, domestic life and the harem shows the selectivity of the account. The detailed accounts of the particularities of the above selected subject matters alludes to the need for neutrality and comprehensive coverage that was established by the Society of Useful Knowledge.

The Account of the Cairene House in *Manners and Customs*

The description of Cairene house appears in the introductory chapter of volume one entitled "The Modern Egyptians". The placement is particularly significant in relation to the commentary Lane makes on the Egyptian culture. As discussed before, Lane as a Western ethnographer had a predetermined cultural agenda in looking at the selective aspects of the Cairene culture. The opening sentence of the introductory chapter sets the tone of the text, as Lane observes, ". . . Many of the *peculiarities* in the manners and customs and character of the nation are attributed to the physical peculiarities of the country".³⁰ What is evident from the comment is the predetermined focus Lane had in his mind about the Egyptian culture. The focus as set by the institutional framework and the popular demand of the era, was directed towards the exoticity of the Cairene society - the difference between East and West. The demand of neutrality placed on Lane by the institutional framework is evident in the *scientific* theorizing that accompanies the observation of the peculiarities of the Cairene society. In an attempt to convert his personal observations into institutionalized knowledge, Lane's description is followed by some *objective* justification. Climate and geographical location very often rationalize the selective observation of Lane. Even human qualities were supported by scientific theorizing as Lane observes, "The heat of the summer months is sufficiently oppressive to

²⁹ Cited in Leila Ahmed, *Edward W. Lane*. The Mirror, xxix, January, 1837 p.58 .

³⁰ Introduction, *Manners and Customs* p. 1

occasion considerable lassitude at the same time, it excites *the Egyptians* to intemperance in sensual enjoyments. . .”³¹(italic added)

The categorical reduction of human quality to some scientific rationalization is one of the characteristic features of the “Manners and Customs”. However the objective rationalization was not free of the cultural bias of focusing at the selective aspect of the Egyptian society. The description of the Cairene house though supported by climatic validation showed the aspect of selectivity and the overt focus on details. With this cultural agenda Lane focused on the private house of Cairo as a way of describing the difference between the Cairene and the Western. It became a physical setting for describing the domestic life of the people of Cairo, to which Lane returns frequently as a way of establishing his observation of the Cairene society.

Lane highlighted certain aspects of the Cairene house, where the selection of the certain architectural and spatial elements is significant. The description proceeds from the exterior appearance to the internal layout of the spaces with an emphasis on the details. The entrance door of the house is described with an emphasis on the distinct system of placing Arabic inscription on the door, “ the object of which will be explained when I treat the superstition of the Egyptians”.³² Thus Lane frequently moves back to the depiction of the Cairene house in his observation of the Egyptian society. The house becomes a physical manifestation for making comments on the special aspects of the Egyptian culture.

A brief summary of Lane’s description of the Cairene house is important here as a background for understanding the aspect of selectivity in his account. Starting with the brief and general description of the external appearance , material and color of the house, the account moves on to concentrate on the details of the entrance door and the associated dependencies. The iron knocker and the wooden lock is mentioned and showed on the accompanying woodcut drawing (Fig.5 & 6). The apparently neutral description of both these elements is followed up later as a way of commenting on the efficiency and technological rationality of the Egyptian people. The courtyard is described by Lane as the central spatial element of the Cairene house. The visual separation of the courtyard from the exterior public spaces is mentioned with an emphasis on the change of angle of the entrance corridor. The entrance door is portrayed as a protective zone of transition as zealously guarded by a doorman or *bawwab*. The courtyard is seen to be protected from outside view by the enclosing facades of two to three storey height. It is described as being surrounded by service facilities and the male reception space. The lattice window or *mushrabiya*

³¹ *ibid.* p. 4

³² *ibid.* p. 11

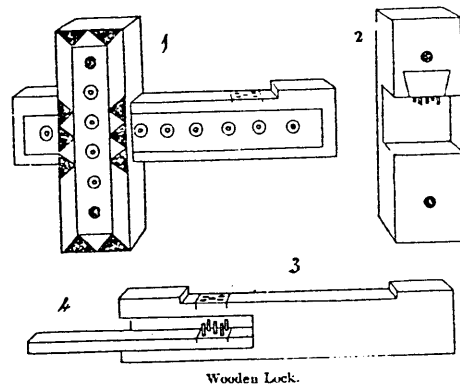


Fig 5. "Wooden Lock"
in *Manners and Customs*

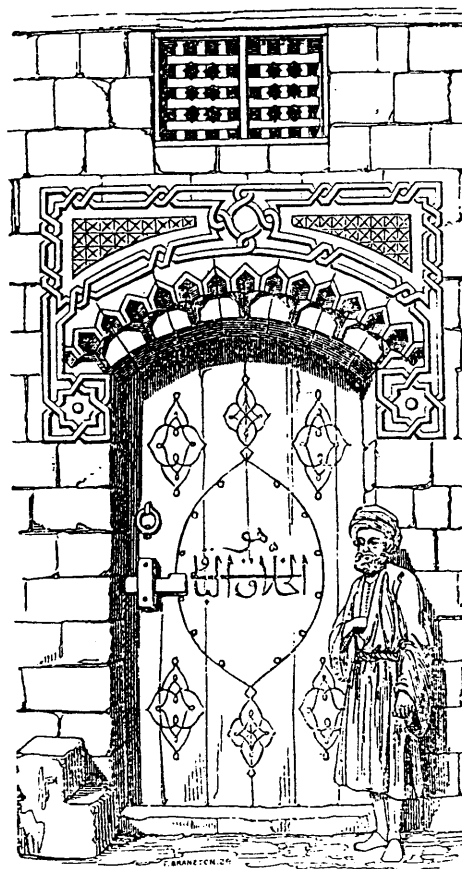


Fig. 6 "Door of a Private House"
in *Manners and Customs*

follows the description of the door. The connection of the *mushrabiya* with the seclusion of the Egyptian women of the house is balanced by the climatic function of the lattice. The documentation of the various types of lattice work shows an attempt to note the details of the window in a comprehensive manner. The emphasis on the scale of the detailed drawing converts Lane's personal observation into useful objective knowledge to be assimilated into a larger body of institutional knowledge. With the main spatial arrangement thus defined, Lane goes into recording the meticulous details of the interior, floor patterns and the ceiling details. The comprehensive account of the house culminated in the detailed account of the highly selected aspects. Aspects that will define the Cairene house as the Other of the European residences.

The Selective Genre of Houses in Lane's Description

In the *Manners and Customs*, Edward Lane based his generic description of the private houses in Cairo on a particular type of elite residence. This is evident in the main spatial arrangement and the elaborate ornamentation of the houses as described by Lane. The image of the courtyard accompanying the description closely resembles the characteristics of affluent Ottoman residences in Cairo. The spatial arrangement of *takhtaboosh* or the pillared gallery and the *maqaad* or the male reception space is very similar to 17th-and 18th-century Ottoman examples. A comparison of the image with the Souhami house, a typical Ottoman affluent class residence shows the resemblance (Fig. 7).

The strict separation of male and female quarters is one of main characteristic feature of these residences. The separation of the spaces for different genders in the house speaks of the level of affluence of its owners. Lane's reference to the domestic slaves in a later chapter entitled "Domestic Life" affirms that elite residences were serviced by an elaborate system of domestic help - both male and female. Lane observed that the presence of the female slave in his description, stating, " . . . [Egyptians] keep a black slave girl or an Egyptian servant to wait upon her [the wife]. . . ."³³ The possession of female slaves was a prerequisite to the running of household activities. Their presence was indispensable in the gender segregated house as maintaining communication between the separated male and female spheres.

³³ *ibid.* p. 181

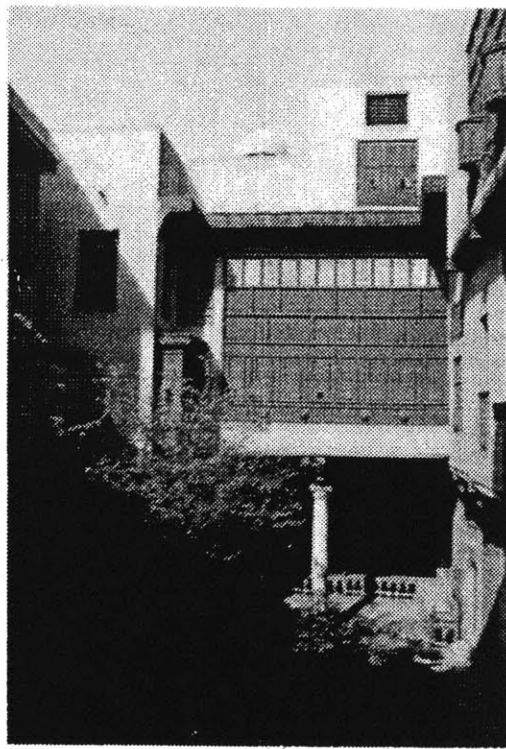


Fig 7. Courtyard Facade , Souhami House (1648 -1796)

Lane mentioned the forbiddance of the male slaves in the harem quarters, noting, “. . . in Egypt I have never heard of an instance of an adult male slave being allowed to see the hhareem of a respectable man whether he belongs to that hhareem or not; and I am assured it is never permitted.”³⁴

The strict system of separation of male and female quarters of the house points to the economic and social status of the family who resided in these type of residences. The female slaves were thus a main mode of communication between the segregated halves. The free and unveiled access of the ‘woman of the lower order’ to the public sphere was described by Lane . In the chapter on the dress of modern Egyptians, he notes that, many of the women of the lower orders, even in the metropolis, never conceal their faces”³⁵. Such unveiled female slaves were essential to the running of the segregated household of the affluent Egyptian society. The special courtyard type thus appears to belong to the affluent class who could afford the services of slaves and servants to maintain the separation of the male and female domains.

Following the detailed description of the courtyard type Cairene house, Lane briefly mentioned the multiunit type residence - the *ruba*. It is described as the multifunctional structure housing both commercial and residential facilities. The commercial functions are located at the street level while the superstructure is divided into a number of lodging units. This type of house had been mentioned as rental house occupied by less affluent “families who cannot afford the rent of a whole house”.³⁶ In Lane’s account there is very little elaboration on this *ruba* type while the courtyard type is described in detail. Apart from the conscious neglect of the multiunit type there is also the contempt for the Egyptian vernacular house in Lane’s text. The peasant houses are described as having a low aesthetic and structural quality. Built of unbaked brick and roofed over with palm branches, these houses are described as “situated upon the eminence of rubbish”³⁷. The lack of importance Lane attached to the Egyptian vernacular is evident in his immediate shift from the human habitation to the pigeon house.

This concentration on the affluent class Cairene residences is similarly evident in Sophia Poole’s description in *The English Woman in Egypt*, provided the authentic description of the harem. The account of her visit to the female quarter of Cairene houses precisely speaks of the social and economic status of the owner. Sophia Poole’s writes about her repeated visit to the

³⁴ ibid chapter on ‘The Hhareem’ p.244

³⁵ ibid p. 74

³⁶ ibid p. 29

³⁷ ibid p.31

harem of Habib Effendi who was the late governor of Cairo. Admissions to elite harems were restricted to female outsiders as we learn from her letter that she had to approach a resident missionary's wife in Cairo to gain permission of access to the governor's house.³⁸ The strict separation of the female quarters was a characteristic of the affluent class residences. Sophia Lane Poole and Edward Lane in their accounts were concentrating on these residences in providing the knowledge about the Cairene houses. Edward Lane selected this genre of Cairene houses as representative of houses which had distinct separation of the male and the female quarters - a notable feature of the Cairene elite society.

The Centrality of Harem in Lane's Account of the Cairene house

In the 19th-century context of Western representation, Lane's description of the Cairene house focused on the harem quarter. As a way of providing entertaining knowledge to the West, the secluded quarter of woman became central in the representation of the Cairene house. The focus on the harem is also evident from Sophia Poole's publication, *The English woman in Egypt*, which immediately followed her brother Lane's account. For accumulating the authentic and first hand information the female authorship became important. The female author became an authentic vehicle through which the invisibility of the harem could be approached and documented. Sophia Lane Poole in her own description of the Egyptian society mentions this role. In the preface she notes,

" The opportunities I might enjoy of obtaining an insight into the mode of life of the higher classes of the ladies of this country, and of seeing many things highly interesting in themselves and rendered more so by their being accessible to a lady , suggested to him (Edward Lane) the idea that I might both gratify my own curiosity and collect much information of a novel and interesting nature, which he proposed I should embody in a series of familiar letters to a friend"³⁹

In 1845, Sophia Lane Poole focused on elite residences and like her brother Edward Lane became an source of authentic information of the harem. The role of female authorship had been important as a way of authenticating the imaginations and fantasies of the Oriental harem. The interesting phenomenon through which the harem is represented by female author shows

³⁸ *The English Woman in Egypt* p. 206 , Sophia Lane Poole's letter mentions her approaching the wife of the resident missionary, Mrs. Sieders who introduced her to the harem of Habib Effendi. Letter written in February, 1833.

³⁹ *The English Woman in Egypt* Preface p.vi

the Western preoccupation with the female quarter of harem and the life within. Sophia Poole's work closely resembled the work of Lane, the significant difference is the first hand authentic description of the secluded quarter of the Cairene houses. A parallel example can be found in Lady Mary Wortly Montagu who provided the description of the harem interiors of the Constantinople and became a major source for Ingre's " Turkish Bath". Such female writers became a surrogate for male authors who were not permitted to enter the harem quarters according to the social practice of female seclusion. The female authorship of Lady Montagu became a surrogate for male voyeurism as Ingre fantasizes about the harem interiors based on her letters. Ingre acknowledged his dependence on the early eighteenth century letters of Lady Montagu for the description of harems of Constantinople.⁴⁰

The use of female authorship shows the colonial interest in the harem. In Lane's account, the emphasis on the harem also becomes evident in the assignment of three chapters (Chapter v, vi & vii) to "Domestic Life" in the *Manners and Customs* of which one is solely assigned to the description of the harem. The harem served as a physical manifestation of the social practices of segregation of the genders. The introverted character justified Lane's observation of the social segregative practices and an emphasis on its details established his authority over the Egyptian social life and practices. Stanley Lane Poole's account further establishes gender separation as the main determinant of the introverted character of the Cairene house.

The demand of neutrality placed by the institutional frame work led Lane to remain apparently objective in the description of the house. The description appears to be free of immediate social and cultural judgment. This cautious description was however occasionally interspersed with the comment on the social system of Egypt. As a way of providing authentic and neutral knowledge for the Western audience, Lane supported his personal observations with some form of climatic or technological observation. However the objective rationalization was supporting his cultural judgment about the society. The description of the wooden lock is an illustrative example. The detailed account of the form and mechanism of the wooden lock appears at the end of the description of the house. Accompanied by detailed drawing and measurement Lane concluded, "It is not difficult to pick this kind of lock".⁴¹ The comment on the functional inefficiency of the lock in Lane is further elaborated by Stanley Lane Poole as he observes, "Nothing could be clumsier or more easy to pick".⁴² Stanley Poole further uses the architectural details as a ground for social or religious criticism. Lane Poole comments on the presence of the

⁴⁰ See Marilyn R. Brown, "The Harem Dehistoricized: Ingre's Turkish Bath " in *Arts*, Summer, 1987.

⁴¹ *Manners and Customs* p.28

⁴² *Story of Cairo* p.12

peoples, observing "... but this is not a land where people hurry overmuch - didn't our prophet Mohammad upon whom be peace say haste come from the devil".⁴³ This example shows the cultural biases implicit in the apparently neutral depiction of the architectural elements in Lane, which could be restructured and reformulated to connote cultural and religious denigration by Lane's successors.

Lane's ethnographic vigilance is evident in the manner of his description of the harem in the introductory chapter. After a hurried mention of the harem in relation to the door (bab-el-hhareem) leading to the harem, Lane moves on to other descriptions. However he mentions the seclusion of woman in the harem without dwelling on the subject at length. With a supporting footnote, the door of harem is specially identified in the accompanying image of the courtyard, as "that which faces the spectator" (Fig.8).⁴⁴ In the woodcut drawing of the courtyard the carefully shut doorway conforms to Lane's description as an entrance leading to a quarter of the house which belong exclusively "to the women, their *master* and his children".⁴⁵ (italic added) The reference to the male of the house as 'the master' implies the inferior status of women in the Egyptian society. This allusion to the slavery of woman is a common theme in Lane's description of the domestic life of the Egyptians. In his chapter on domestic life, Lane describes the female inhabitant of the harem consisting "first, of a wife or wives (to the number of four); secondly, of female slaves, some of whom. . . are generally concubines. . . thirdly of female free servants . . ."⁴⁶ The reference to the system of polygamy and slavery is obvious in such description of the harem. In addition, the description of the life in the harem supports the characteristic "laziness" attributed to the Eastern people. The lack of industry in the lives of the Egyptian male is mentioned in relation to his daytime retreat to the inaccessible quarter of the harem. Lane observes, "Often he retires to recline in the hhareem ; where a wife or female servant watches over her repose, or rubs the sole of his feet with her hands."⁴⁷ The reduction of the Oriental male into a *despotic* and *lazy* native is a common subject matter in the 19th century Western representations.

✓ Linda Nochlin in her critique of 19th century French realist school of painting, discusses the cultural bias in Western representations of the social practices regarding Middle Eastern

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Manners and Customs* p. 17

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Manners and Customs* p.181

⁴⁷ *ibid* p.193

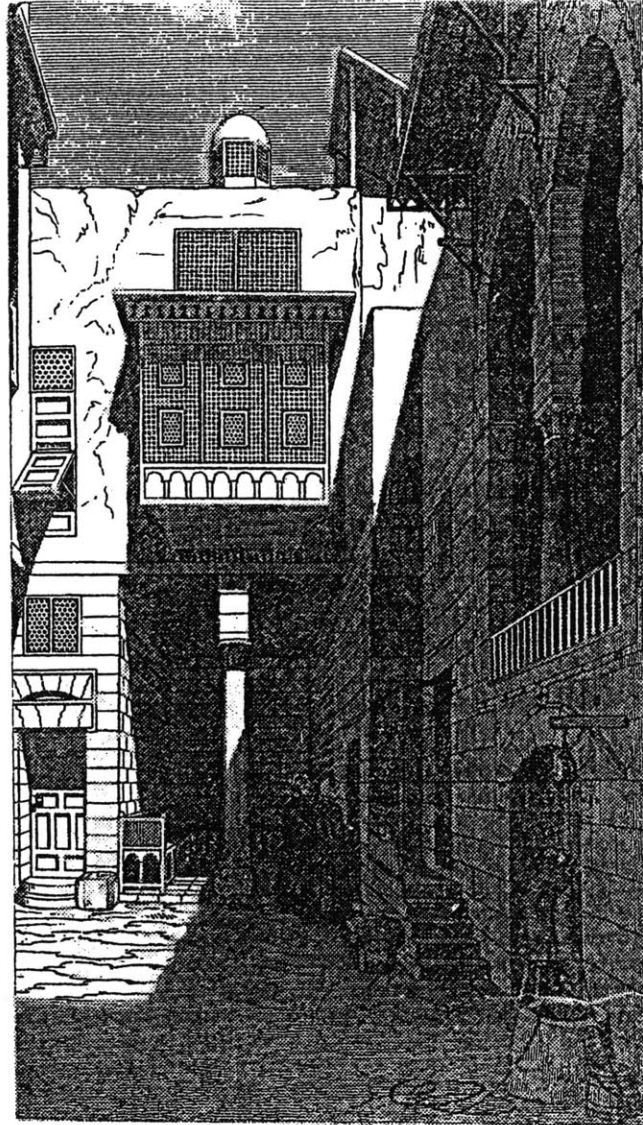


Fig 8. "Court of a Private House" in *Manners and Customs*

woman. The captivity and helplessness of the Oriental woman in Jean Leon Gérôme's paintings of *Slave Markets* displayed the humiliation of the Oriental women by the Oriental despot. In Such representation according to Nochlin, connotes two levels of power hierarchy. At one level it is the subjugation of the woman by the Oriental male at another the superiority of the Western man over the Oriental race who indulges in such subhuman practice of slavery. The message underlying the portrayal of oppression of the Eastern woman was meant to establish the European society in opposite terms - liberative and non segregative (Fig. 9).⁴⁸

✧ Lane's *objective* ethnographic description of the Cairene house shows the Western intention of self definition. The cultural bias becomes evident when the harem is used as a setting for describing and authenticating the segregative and inferior practices of the Egyptian society. The cultural politics of representation is obvious in Stanley Lane Poole's description as he immediately moves from the architectural description to the social and religious criticism of the Egyptian society. Lane Poole's criticism of the Mohammedan society in Egypt is based on the practice of segregating woman in the harem. Following the description of the life in harem, Lane observes:

✧ In truth the Egyptian ladies cannot venture to give themselves airs; they suffer from the low opinion which all Mohammedans entertain of the fair sex. The unalterable iniquity of womankind is an uncontrollable fact among the men of the East; It is part of their religion. Did not the blessed Prophet say, '... I stood at the gates of the Hell, and lo! most of its inhabitants were women.'⁴⁹

Lane Poole's description of the Cairene house thus highlights the woman's quarter as a way of arriving at the conclusion he makes about the Muslim practice of subjugating woman. As discussed before, the apparently paternalistic descriptions of the female subjugation is paralleled by a criticism of the character of the Oriental woman. The same vices of laziness and irrationality are attributed to the harem inhabitants. From Lane to Lane Poole the cultural bias in representing the Cairene house becomes strongly evident.

⁴⁸ See Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient" in *Art in America*, May 1983. also in *The Politics of Vision : Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, pp. 33-57. Nochlin argues that Gérôme's paintings, as belonging to the 19th-century French realist school, had Orientalist bias. According to Nochlin the humiliation of the naked slave girl offered the Western painter and viewers a moralistic voyeurism. The realism in Gérôme's painting had been affirmed by Maxim Du Camp, a French photographer, as being a literal reproduction of the Middle Eastern slave markets, however this exactitude as Nochlin argues was not free of Orientalist bias. The realistic representation of Gérôme's painting had the underlying message of male despotism of the Oriental society.

⁴⁹ *Story of Cairo* p. 20

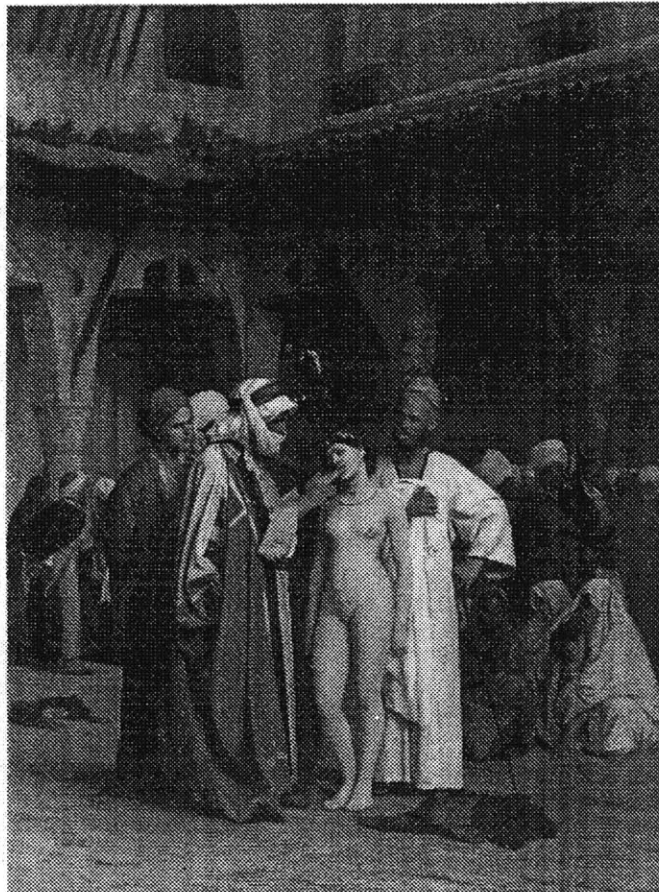


Fig. 9 Jean Léon Gérôme, *The Slave Market* early 1860s
Sterling and Francise Clerk Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts

The practice of gender segregation is seen as central to the arrangement of the spaces in the Cairene house. The concluding remark on the Cairene house in Lane shows this centrality of harem in the house. Lane observes that the principal aim of the architect of the Cairene house is to make it private as a way of supporting gender segregation as promoted by the Cairene society. The inward looking character of the house is thus attributed mainly to the social practice of secluding woman. The harem which at the initial part of the description in Lane seemed a secondary factor in the house design gains central importance at the conclusion. In these depictions, the secluded woman's quarter is the central theme and the architectural elements of courtyard and *mushrabiya* are considered to be the manifestation of the segregative practice of the Cairene society. The focus on the segregative practice was directed towards defining the superiority of the European societies. The definition of the colonized Egyptian culture was in reciprocity directed towards definition of the colonizing West.

The Characteristic Spatial Elements of the Cairene House

The characteristic features of the Cairene house are chosen in relation to the central theme of interiority and gender seclusion. The courtyard, lattice window and bent access become main defining elements of the house. The concentration on these elements is accompanied by a focus on the details. The elaborate ornamentation of the interior of the house has been captured in meticulous and lexicographic manner of presentation. The different architectural elements are studied in parts. This manner of representation closely resembles the predecessor of Lane's account, the French account of Egypt *Description de l'Egypte* which followed the Napoleonic expedition in Egypt in 1798.⁵⁰ In the French representation even the human subjects were categorized in physiognomic charts. Representation of the human physiognomy and facial expressions involved arranging them in charts of 'types'. (Fig.10)⁵¹ In the preface Lane mentions the *Description de l'Egypte* as the 'Great French Work' and his manner of representation shows close affinity with it.⁵²

The detail in Lane's account serves two purposes. On the one hand i) it helped convert the personal observations into institutionalized knowledge and on the other ii) it established his authority over the subject matter. The overt references to scales and measurements transforms

⁵⁰ See *Egypt Revealed : Scenes from Napoleon's Description de l'Egypte*

⁵¹ *ibid.* See *Egyptian Portraits* Pl. 165

⁵² See *Manners and Customs*. in the preface in a long footnote Lane acknowledges his admiration of the work of Jomard with the criticism that many of his accounts of the Egyptian peoples were merely philosophical generalization. See Preface p.v.



Fig. 10. "Egyptian potraits": Human Facial Types in Description de l'Egypte

general observation of architectural elements into instrumental knowledge. The intention behind the documentation of the meticulous details appears to be the transference of information about the East to the Western readers. The pattern book manner of describing the picturesque elements of the Cairene house was later followed by other Western representations of the house. Prisse D'Avennes' details of the *mushrabiya* shows the same manner of representing the parts of the lattice window.⁵³(Fig.11 & 12) The instrumental knowledge, supported by detailed textual and visual documentation, was easy to assimilate into the larger body of institutionalized knowledge of the East.

In the authenticating function the concentration on details established Lane's authority over the subject matter. A detailed description of the house , specially the interior part of it established Lane as an observer who had authority over the description of the house and who could claim his information to be authentic. The concern for authenticity is expressed in the preface of the *Manners and Customs* where in a long footnote Lane claims his account to be more objective over the "philosophical observation" of the *Description de l' Egypte* and over the incomplete and untrue version of Burckhardt's *Arabic proverbs*.⁵⁴ Lane's concern for the meticulous details was an attempt to establish the authenticity and comprehensive nature of his account. If the details served authenticating function, they were not devoid of social commentary. The knowledge about the house in Cairo once established by the detailed documentation of Lane became a source of information for the latter accounts. The successive representations of the involves less account of details and more commentary on the practices of the Egyptian society. Restructuring of Lane's account of the Cairene house in the *Story of Cairo* is an obvious example. Disentangled from the details, the representation of the Cairene house in Lane focuses on certain spatial and architectural elements. The argument is that the elements were selected in relation to the thematic focus on the woman's quarter. Courtyard and *mushrabiya* are therefore important characteristic elements in the house. Together they define the interior looking character of the house and by highlighting them, Lane and his successors' descriptions were focusing on the introverted character of the house.

⁵³ Prisse d'Avennes' *L'Art Arabe d'après les monuments du Cairo depuis le VIIe siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, was published in 1877 in four volumes. Earlier d'Avennes published *L'Album Oriental* (1847-51) which described and illustrated life and customs in Egypt. In the introductory text, d'Avennes notes his concern for the rescuing the treasures of Islamic art from decay and oblivion. This concern was paralleled by dissemination of information of architectural details of Egypt in a tradition already established by Pascal Coste and Owen Jones. Briony Llewellyn observes that many details of William Burges' Arab Hall at Cardiff Castle (1880) were taken from *L'Art Arabe*. It however remained an isolated example. The point here is that the documented details in *L'Art Arabe* was reused in Western architecture. In this way the documentation of details might have served as the useful knowledge in the West. See Briony Llewellyn's "Prisse d'Avennes: *L'Art Arabe*" in *Arts and the Islamic World*, Winter 1983/4.

⁵⁴ *Manners and Customs* p.v

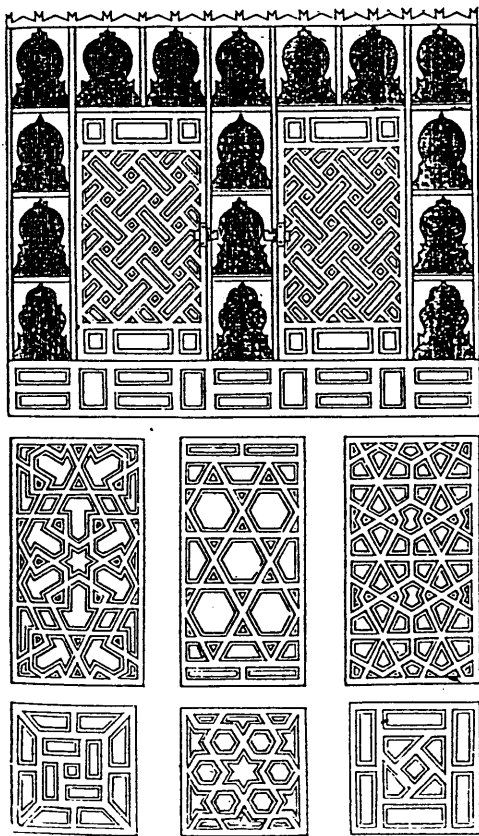


Fig. 11 Specimen of Panel Work
in *Manners and Customs*

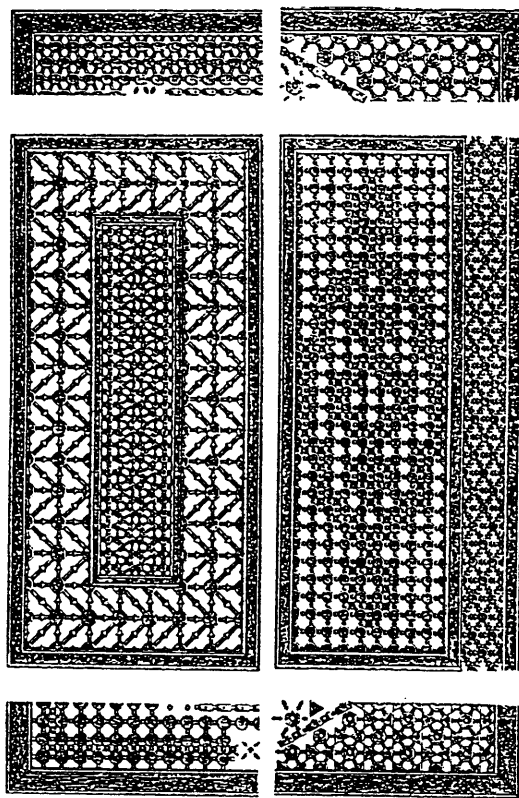


Fig. 12 Details of mushrabiya,
Prisse d' Avennes 1877

Courtyard as Segregating the Genders in the Cairene house.

The courtyard in Lane is shown as the main structuring element of the Cairene house. It is represented as an interior space frequented by the male inhabitants. The male reception rooms, the *maqaad* and the *mandara*, open on to this courtyard. The upper storey is visually separated from the courtyard by the use of the lattice window. The courtyard is the internal public space within the house where the access of the woman of the family is restricted. Lane's woodcut drawing titled " Court of a Private House in Cairo " shows the seclusion of the upper story from the lower courtyard.(See Fig. 8) Lane Poole's observation of the courtyard describes it as". . . silent and deserted as the guarded windows which overlook the street. . . for the woman's apartments are carefully shut off from the court, into which open only the guest rooms and other masculine and semi public spaces"⁵⁵

The spaces around the courtyard according to Lane's description are the male reception rooms at the ground and the first floor level called the *maqaad* and the *mandara*. The *mandara* is usually located at the ground level with wooden grated windows opening on to the courtyard. It is directly accessible from the courtyard and reserved for the male guests. A flight of steps lead from the ground level to the *maqaad*, which shows its easy accessibility from the courtyard. Its openness and accessibility is a contrast to the closed character of the upper harem quarters. The third reception room at the level of the courtyard, the pillared hall or the *takhtaboosh* is an open loggia with its one side open to the courtyard. Furnished with a sitting arrangement it is described as a space for receiving the male visitors who are not important enough to be received in the more elaborate reception halls.

There is also the mention of two courtyards in large Cairene houses. In a footnote Lane notes that the second courtyard was reserved for females of the family.⁵⁶ The seclusion of the female members from the central courtyard is reinforced by this footnote. The segregative aspect of the courtyard is further strengthened by behavioral norms observed in the society. Lane in his chapter mentions the practice of verbally announcing the male presence in the house. According to Lane, in the certain houses where the male reception rooms were located only at the upper floors, certain behavioral practice was common to announce the male presence by uttering "destoor" (meaning permission) or "ya S'atir" (meaning Oh! protector). ⁵⁷This behavioral

⁵⁵ *Story of Cairo* p 13

⁵⁶ *Manners and Customs* p.12 See footnote

⁵⁷ *Manners and Customs* p..246

practice in the Cairene society is used to affirm the separation of genders in strictly defined spatial boundaries.

The courtyard in the description of both Lane and Lane Poole is given monumental importance in relation to the segregative aspect of the society. Lane concludes that the design consideration central to the evolution of the form of the Cairene house is the consideration of separating the genders. In Lane Poole's description the centrality becomes even more prominent, as he observes ". . . wooden screens and the secluded courts are necessary to fulfill the requirements of the Mohammedan system of separating sexes."⁵⁸ From these conclusion of the Western representations it is clear that the separation of the gender was the main theme in the representation of Cairene house in Lane and his successors.

The Mushrabiya as Visual Separator

The mushrabiya is used to support the central theme of the introverted character of the Cairene house in Lane. From Lane to the other successive representations the use of mushrabiya as the architectural element signified the separation of genders. Though the manner of representation varies from Lane to the successive representations, the association of the mushrabiya with seclusion of the female remains constant. In Lane the textual representation of the lattice work is accompanied by a detailed and scaled visual representations. The concentration on the details of the mushrabiya shows Lanes effort to provide useful knowledge to the society with ethnographic exactitude.(Fig. 13) Lane deviates from the detailed documentary manner of representation while the social commentary and the climatic analysis remains constant. In Lane the social commentary dominates the representation.

In Lane's contrived attempt to remain neutral of the social commentary, the climatic advantages of the lattice is described in addition to its social functions of visual segregation. To support the climatological thesis, the etymology of the word "mushrabiya " has been explored as being related with "a place for drink" or " __for drinking"⁵⁹. The practice of placing series of water bottles in this type of window is mentioned to show the cooling function of the lattice work. the climatic advantage of the window is contradicted in the same paragraph by the mention of use of glass protecting the interior from the penetrating cold of the Cairene winter. The climatic advantage is immediately countered by describing the role lattice play in obstructing light and

⁵⁸ *Story of Cairo* p.13

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.12

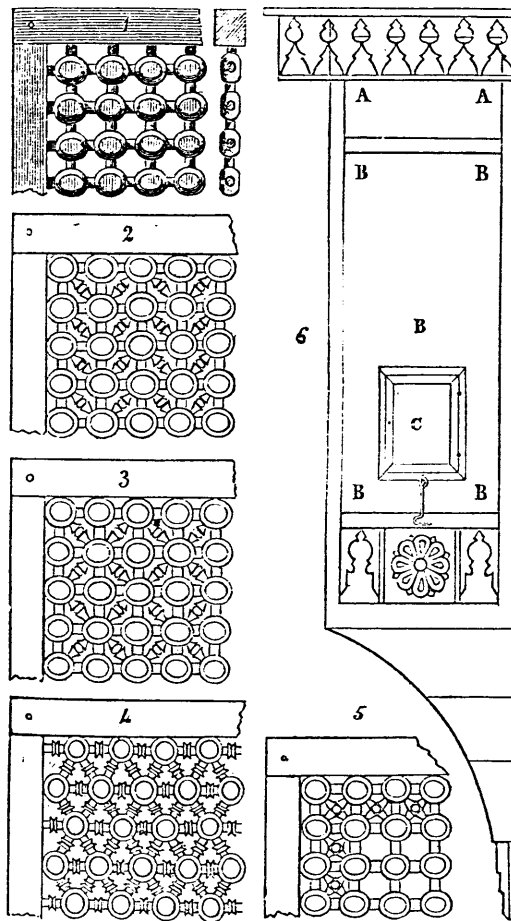


Fig 13. Specimen of Lattice Work in *Manners and Customs*

air. The contradiction of the climatic thesis is accompanied by its function of the visual seclusion. Lane observes, ". . . it screens the inmates of the house from the view of the persons without. . ."

⁶⁰ The description of the *mushrabiya*, with its function of visual separation, is immediately followed by Lane's balance of the detailed documentation and scientific environmental justification. The segregative role of the *mushrabiya* is seen as its main characteristic which is developed by Lane. Lane employs the visual obstruction of the *mushrabiya* as authenticating his observation of the inferiority of the Muslim culture. Lane recognizes the space behind the *mushrabiya* as a *spying place* for the Egyptian woman who lead a life of solely engaging in the pursuit of carnal delight. The image that Lane paints of the Cairene elite woman is very similar to the popular image of the woman in the East as publicized by Western representations. The secluded woman in the harems are seen as engaged in leisurely lifestyle and are incapable of intellectual pursuit. The reflection on the life behind the lattice became a widely popular subject of Western representation. J. F. Lewis's painterly vision of the life in the harem (Fig.14) closely resembles Lane Poole's remark ⁶¹

" . . . the Fair houries we imagine behind the lattice window are very dreary, uninteresting people; they know nothing and take but an indifferent interest in anything that goes on ; they are just beautiful - a few of them and nothing more"⁶²

The apparently paternalistic overtone of many observation of the oppressive life in harem is contradicted by the derogatory comments on the character of the Eastern female. The mention of the small door in the lattice work of *mushrabiya* is immediately associated with the comment on the character of the Eastern woman, ". . . and the fair ladies of Cairo are not always above the pardonable vanity of letting a passer by discover that they are fair."⁶³ From the documentary representation of inert architectural details to the criticism of the personal behavior of the Eastern woman shows the cultural bias in the representation. The description of the *mushrabiya* neutralized by the detailed and scaled drawings shows an underlying cultural

⁶⁰ *ibid* p.11

⁶¹ See John Frederick Lewis's harem paintings of the Cairo interiors especially, *Life in Harem* (1858), *The Reception* (1873) and *An Intercepted Correspondence, Cairo* (1869). The relaxed lifestyle of the harem inhabitants is one of the main themes in this series. Artist John Frederick Lewis, a contemporary of Lane, was resident in Cairo from 1840-1850 living in the northern Esbekiya quarter of Cairo. See Leila Ahmed *Edward W. Lane* p. 27 and also John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession* pp. 131-142. An important point to note in *An Intercepted Correspondence* is the reuse of a harem scene from his earlier paintings on the same subject. Note the repeated use of a predetermined image in the latter representations, which I find an important feature in the lineage of Lane's description of the Cairene house.

⁶² *Story of Cairo* p. 14

⁶³ *ibid*. p. 12

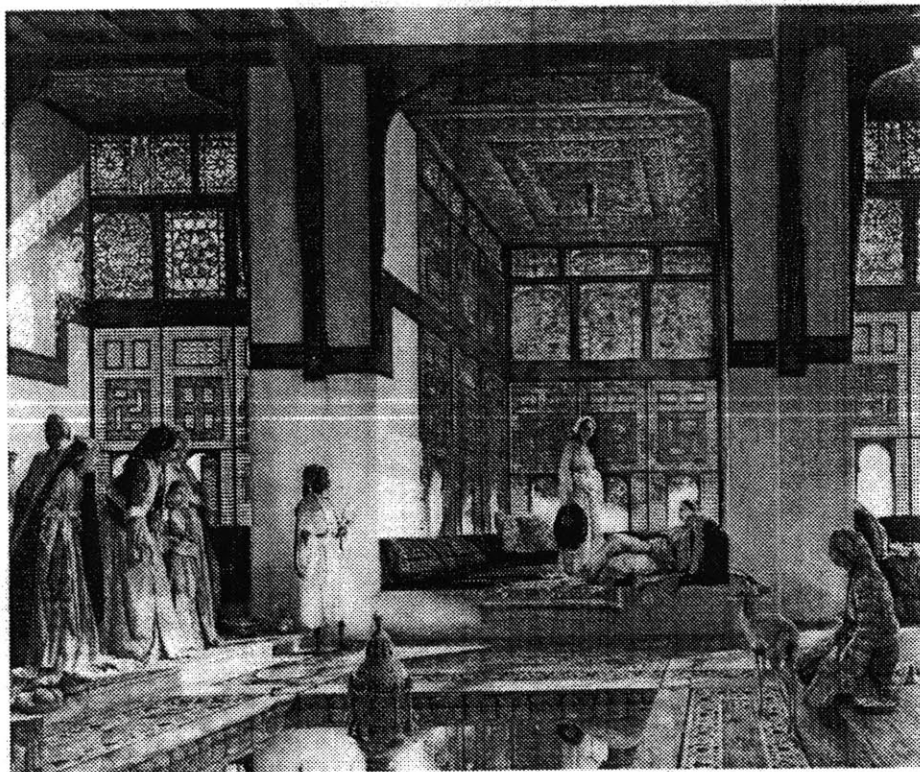


Fig 14. John Frederick Lewis, *The Reception* 1873
Yale Center for British Art , New Haven

bias of reducing the East into a socially inferior prototype and the house of the Eastern culture became a authenticating tool in the hand of the colonizer.

The Colonial Image of the Cairene House

The emphasis on the selected elements like the courtyard, mushrabiya and bent access together contributed in creation of the image of the Cairene house as the introverted type. This inward looking character of the house once established by Lane's classic account was consistently followed by the latter Western descriptions. This interiority of the houses of Cairo became an established theme of representing the domestic architecture in Egypt. Supported with scientific and objective rationalization the paradigmatic 19th century definitions focused on a special genre of courtyard house which establish the Cairene house as the introverted courtyard type. Both in Lane and Lane Poole the introverted character was considered as the determining factor of the spatial arrangement. Lane - in 1902, echoed Lane's emphasis on the closed character of the courtyard concluding,

"The Eastern architect's art lies in so constructing your house that you cannot look into your neighbor's windows, nor he into yours ; and the obvious way of attaining this end is to build the rooms round a high open court, and to closely veil the windows with lattice blinds . . . "64

The emphasis of the selected elements were alluding to the aspect of maintaining visual separation of the interior spaces. The mushrabiya and the courtyard were emphasized in relation to the interiority of the house. The construction of the colonial image of the Cairene house, relied on the architectural and spatial elements which were related to the social system of segregation of woman in distinct harem quarters of the house. From Lane to Lane Poole, the cultural judgment of the Egyptian society was based on the distinct system of separating gender in the secluded houses. This in Lane - led to denigration of the Muslim practice of subjugation of woman. Following the description of the selective elements of the Cairene house, he comments the treatment of woman in Islam, " . . . the Muslims have always treated woman as inferior order of beings, necessary indeed, and ornamental, but certainly not entitled to respect or deference."65

64 ibid p.13

65 ibid p..21

The emancipatory tone of Lane Poole's comment can be deceiving. By commenting on the woman's inferiority in the Egyptian society, this tradition of Orientalist representation was establishing the Egyptian society as different from the Western societies. The introverted house was an architectural manifestation of this Otherness of the Egyptian society. The Cairene house in Lane and Lane -- became a way of defining the non segregative and superior identity of the West. The cultural bias came to play in this representation when the focus was created on those aspects that spoke of the inferiority of the Eastern society. The gender segregative colonial image of the Cairene house asserted the superior identity of the West over the Eastern societies.

Chapter 3

The Post - Colonial Representation : The Arab House and Hassan Fathy

*" . . . and here you are now believing in the superstition of a new sort: the superstition of industrialization, the superstition of nationalization, the superstition of Arab unityLike children you believe that in the bowels of the earth lies the treasure you'll attain by some miracle, and that you'll solve all your difficulties and set up a Garden of Paradise..."*⁶⁶

Faced by the need to conciliate between tradition and modernization, the post-colonial societies after the formation of the nation states showed an ideology of appropriation of mixed symbols. *Essentialism* and *epochalism*, as Clifford Geertz terms the two diverse agendas, came together in the post-colonial definition of identity.⁶⁷ The post colonial identity search tried to achieve a balance between "The Indigenous Way of Life" and "The Spirit of the Age". For achieving the former, the post colonial society looked for the roots of identity as considered embedded in local tradition and culture. Essentially these are the symbols which are left uncontaminated by the colonial presence. In this attempt of achieving a balance, post-colonial society recognizes certain areas as predominantly indigenous and traditional, both for appropriation and application. The vernacular, the home, women, spirituality are to remain as the repository of tradition. These are considered *the interior* of the society which is to remain inviolable as opposed to certain areas which are *the exterior* accommodating the advent of modernization. Domestic life as the realm of the inner self is assigned such a static value and woman is called upon to be its symbol. If a certain degree of generality is acceptable among the non-Western societies sharing the colonial experience, this appears to be a common attitude towards women. As Partha Chatterjee observes in case of post- independence India,

"Nationalism could neither ignore the West completely nor capitulate to it entirely: the West and its ideal of material progress had to be assimilated selectively, without fundamental change to the native and "inner" Indian self. In other words, questions of change and progress posed in Western attire were conceived as an outer and epiphenomenal aspect of Indian identity, whereas the inner and inviolable sanctum of Indian identity had to do with home, spirituality and the figure of woman as representative of the true self."⁶⁸

⁶⁶Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, p. 59

⁶⁷ Clifford Geertz *The Interpretation of Culture* PP.240-249

⁶⁸Partha Chatterjee as cited by R. Radhakrishnan in 'Nationalism, Gender and the Narrative of Identity' in *Nationalism and Sexualities* p.78

Chatterjee's observation points to two important characteristics of the post colonial identity search - selectivity and invariance. Certain realms are selected as representative of the true self and an invariant role is assigned to these areas. Woman and house are considered an area of manifestation of post-colonial identity. The association between house and woman authenticates the concept of post-colonial identity in the realm of architecture. For example, the frequent use of etymology establishes this relation in rationalizing the traditional Islamic house form.

"The dominant emphasis is on the domestic privacy, the seclusion and segregation of woman. The Arabic name, *sakan* to denote the house is related to the word *sakina* "peaceful and holy", and the word for woman *harim* is in turn related to *haram* (harem), 'sacred area' which denotes the family living quarters. The harem or domestic area of the house is primarily the woman's domain. . . "69

The aspect of female privacy defines the character of the Islamic house. Here Chatterjee's inner/outer distinction is relevant, as the house is considered the interior of the society and the sacrality of it is established in relational term with woman. The house symbolizes the same inner self in architecture seeking an expression of contemporary post-colonial neo-traditional identity. It is evident in the recent agenda of conciliation between tradition and modernization in Islamic architecture. As the physical manifestation of the abstract themes of domesticity, home and woman, the house is to remain pure and traditional. It is made into an authentic icon of traditional identity manifested in architecture. One appropriate example is the selective assimilation of Western technology exclusively in the realm of non-domestic architecture.⁷⁰ The architecture of the domestic spaces is to remain free of such technological interventions. The recent discourse on Islamic architecture recognizes the house as the space of tradition while other non domestic architecture can be modern. Such traditional role assigned to the domestic architecture can be seen in the constant reference to the symbolism of female privacy while the progressive role is symbolized by technology.

In the contemporary post-colonial discourse on Islamic architecture, Hassan Fathy has prophetic importance. His architectural philosophy closely reflects the post-colonial identity search in the Third World context. Central to Fathy's recognition is his philosophy of authentic cultural rootedness in defining an Arab identity. Fathy's design philosophy of the

⁶⁹See Guy T.Petherbridge in 'The House and the Society' in *Architecture of the Islamic World : Its History and Social Meaning* p.196

⁷⁰ Note the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, especially the awarded houses.

Arab house, a definition derived from the medieval Cairene residential architecture and Nubian vernacular had been a seminal concept both in the scholarship and the praxis of Islamic architecture. A new research focus had been generated around the climatic aspects of the Middle Eastern courtyard houses. In the recent architectural practice, Fathy's definition of the Arab house had initiated a new genre of suburban villa architecture which has become widely popular among the new generation of practitioners. His neo-traditional villa architecture has created an "instant Islamic identity kit"⁷¹ widely appropriated in the Islamic countries. In both formalistic image making and design philosophy, Fathy is an influential figure.

Critical appraisal of Fathy had been mainly directed towards the contradiction between his architectural philosophy of "*peasantism*"⁷² and the marked elitism of his architectural practice. Fathy's agenda is based on a vision of an ideal Arab society with a socialist undertone. Paradoxically this design philosophy apparently evolving from a concern for the rural peasants ended up in serving the Egyptian elite culture. While Fathy's agenda of social reform has attracted the Western architectural media, in the local context his appeal lies in the promotion of a post-colonial non-Western Arab identity.

Context of Publication

Hassan Fathy's philosophy on the Arab house initially delineated in "*Gourna - A Tale of Two Villages*" published in 1969 was followed up in subsequent publications. In 1972, Fathy published "*The Arab House in the Urban Setting: Past, Present and Future*."⁷³ In the same year he published, "*The Qaa of the Cairene Arab House: its Development and Some New Usage for its Design Concepts*" first presented earlier at the seminar by the Ministry of Culture, Cairo.⁷⁴ Taken together, these publications form the main body of texts in which his design philosophy of the Arab house was perpetuated. However, the wide publicity that Fathy received was based on the re-publication of "*Gourna -A Tale of Two Villages*" in the U.S. in 1973, titled as "*Architecture for the Poor*"⁷⁵. The same book was published in France in 1977 under the title "*Construire avec le Peuple: Histoire d'un Village d'Egypte, Gourna*"⁷⁶ All these publications

⁷¹William J.R. Curtis in "Towards an Authentic Regionalism" in *Mimar* 19, Jan-Mar 1980. p.27

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Hassan Fathy *The Arab House in the Urban Setting: Past Present and Future*, published by Longman, London, 1972

⁷⁴Seminar titled "*Colloque International sur L'Histoire du Caire*" in 1969, *proceedings publication* in 1972.

⁷⁵ Published by The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London 1973.

⁷⁶Published by Sindbad Paris, 1977-78.

were based on Hassan Fathy's experiment with the New Gourni, a village of 7000 people who had been dislocated from an ancient archaeological site. Commissioned by the Department of Antiquity this project was undertaken as a protective measure to stop the desecration of the antique sites of Old Gourni. A project of such a scale brought Fathy the opportunity to experiment with his idealized vision of the Arab society. Though based on an experiment of providing housing for the rural poor, the book discusses Fathy's basic philosophy about Arab architecture, society, tradition and their interrelation in a larger sociocultural context. Fathy's philosophy about the relevance of an authentic cultural root in defining the architecture for the Arab society is interspersed in the more detailed account of the village experiment at New Gourni.

The Western Appraisal: The Gandhi of Egyptian Architecture

In the RIBA Journal, Colin Ward has compared Hassan Fathy's ideology of village development and social reconstruction with the philosophy of Gandhi in India.⁷⁷ The analogy precisely summarizes the Western view of Fathy's social agenda. To the Western audience, Fathy was the Third World architect/philosopher whose architectural thoughts are based on an agenda of social emancipation of the rural poor. Through his village experiment of New Gourni in 1946 and of Bariz in the Kharga Oasis in 1964, Fathy became widely known as the promoter of indigenous and appropriate technology seeking solution to the problems of underdevelopment and poverty of the rural peasant class. The social agenda of Fathy's book was widely publicized by the Western architectural press, viewed as containing a vision of social emancipation. His architectural philosophy was seen as directed towards rural rehabilitation through cooperative self help utilizing the indigenous technology and building material. Seen as an appropriate solution to the typical Third World problems of under development and poverty one reviewer of his book concludes,

Perhaps what is needed is a new breed of paraprofessionals, a kind of barefoot architects and social workers, willing to work with the villagers and to deal with their rural problems through Hassan Fathy's 'appropriate technology'. Knowledge of water purification, sewage disposal and perhaps birth control is needed as much as skill in town planning and mud brick walling⁷⁸.

⁷⁷Colin Ward, "For Fellah with Nothing", RIBA Journal 81, Feb. 1974 p.36

⁷⁸Robert.B.Marquis in AIA Journal December 1980. p.39

Cast within the context of the developing countries, Fathy's philosophy was seen as addressing larger issues of social up gradation, which attempted to benefit the *fellahins* (the Egyptian farmers) class at the grass root level. Such a social agenda was again recognized when in 1966 Fathy was appointed as the United nations consultant for the rural housing in Saudi Arabia.

The prophetic image of Fathy in the Western press was closely related to his social agenda of salvaging the rural mass of Egypt and the neighboring countries. A recent appraisal by J. M.. Richards defined Fathy as a modernist based on his social agenda of improving human living conditions.⁷⁹ According to Richards, the Utopian vision of the society as perpetuated by the modern movement is very similar to that of Fathy's vision of the ideal Arab society. Moreover while the modernists discarded the past, Fathy reconciled tradition with the vision of an ideal society. Thus Richards assessed Fathy on the basis of his intent to generate an appropriate architecture with social orientations. The philosophy of Fathy thus was viewed as having the same social ambitions as the modern movement.

Some Western appraisals, apart from its obvious elitism is critical of Fathy's belief in the *indigenous origin* as an inspiration for the development of an architectural idiom for contemporary Arab countries. Fathy's ideology of *return* to the pure and authentic tradition had been questioned in terms of its relevance in the contemporary times. J. M.. Richards while recognizing Fathy's social vision questions the validity of using indigenous for urban architecture, when in Egypt the urban values are layered with different foreign interventions and cultural interactions. Another critic John Habraken commented regarding the relevance of the antiquarian approach ,

"Fathy's housing system derives from a different simple age; it is part of a total ecosystem which embraced the lives and the attitudes of the peoples. But the conditions have changed. As one cannot build colonial Williamsburg, so one cannot reintroduce the building system of the Nubians or the Tenth century Copts"⁸⁰

The importance of this comment lies on the critique of reviving traditional architecture in a changed historical context. The ahistorical and acontextual appropriation of traditional architectural, spatial, constructional system raises issues regarding the association between the social values and the architectural forms, whether one could be separated from the other and stylistically appropriated to serve an agenda of post-colonial identity search. Despite such

⁷⁹J.M. Richards, In the International Context, in *Hassan Fathy*, Mimar Book, 1985 p. 189

⁸⁰Cited by Felicica Clark in "Appropriate Invention", *Architectural Record*, 167 1980 p .189

criticism, Fathy in the Western context became famous for his social attitude striving for an architectural idiom which would solve some of the pressing social problems of the Third World. In 1974, Time magazine featured Fathy under the title "Architect for the Poor" in which he was portrayed as a traditionalist architect who strove to build affordable housing for the peasants of Egypt.⁸¹ The article also commented on the bureaucratic and professional obstacles which Fathy encountered in his experiment with mud architecture,

Egyptian authorities were not impressed; they regarded the building of the mud houses as a backward step....The building industry scorned the idea of native architecture because it offered few new jobs and only a small market for materials. While Fathy's philosophy was largely ignored, other architects in the region were becoming enthralled by the efficient Western ways of building. As a result, from Baghdad to Benghazi, localize building blocks of dreary high-rise buildings rose along drab, dusty boulevard"⁸²

Thus Fathy was considered as the representative architect of the Middle East who was opposed by the bureaucracy and the architectural professionals in his endeavor to achieve a socially conscious design. This observation was supported by the fact that Fathy's project for New Gournah was never completed and was abandoned in 1948. *Architecture for the Poor* was therefore seen as an account of a failure of an emancipatory project caused by the rigidity and indifference of the Third World bureaucracy. Thus in the Western press, in relation to the Middle Eastern context, Fathy was represented as the radical social visionary in his single mission against mass Westernization that defaced the architecture and urbanism of the Middle East.

The absence of a parallel Arabic edition of the *Architecture for the Poor* was considered as the Egyptian rejection of Fathy's ideas and as a symptom of the wholesale adoption of Western high technology by the Middle Eastern societies. This mass Westernization was considered to have eventually led to the ugliness in the architectural and urbanism scene of the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s. Criticizing this appropriation of the Western technology, one reviewer asks, "Why not mud brick and dome? Why Egypt and similar countries so powerfully resisted Fathy's system for 20 years?"⁸³ The underlying acceptance of Fathy's ideas as a solution to the problems the Third World architecture, urbanism and housing is evident in such comments. It is from the Western vantage point that Hassan Fathy was portrayed as the prophet of appropriate architecture for the Third World.

⁸¹Time, No104, Sep.1974 pp.82-83

⁸² ibid.

⁸³ Felicica Clark, Architectural Record 167 1980 p.189

The Egyptian Appraisal

Though Fathy's famous book *Architecture for the Poor* was never published in Arabic language, the wide exposure it received brought him into attention in his own country. The reviews Fathy received in Egypt are salutary and a close reflection of the simultaneous Western assessment. The editorial of *Alam al Bena* (May 1982) featuring Hassan Fathy states,

"In this period Hassan Fathi was building Al-Gorna village in Upper Egypt with mud bricks as a local material which suits the Egyptian farmers needs. Other Arab and European architects were constructing Cairo buildings, and palaces, with imported ideas from European architecture, either classic or modern to the extent that the local architecture character has vanished."⁸⁴

As established by the Western press, Fathy was seen as offering an alternative to the mass westernization in the Middle Eastern countries. The recognition that Fathy received in his country is closely tied to the political context of Egypt. In 1969, Fathy was awarded the Egyptian National Prize for Arts and Letters, at a time when Egyptian culture was given high value in the social and political context. Following the defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, the reactive focus tried to glorify aspects of the Egyptian culture which were considered indigenous. At the same time Fathy's incomplete project of the New Gournia from 1948 attracted renewed interest. In 1969, the Ministry of Culture, published the account of the Gournia experiment and was widely circulated in the country. In the early 1970s under the regime of Anwar Sadat the recovery of the Suez Canal led to another wave of interest in the indigenous culture and architecture. In the political context of Arabism, Fathy's philosophy of anti Westernism flourished.

In the 1970's post oil boom period in the Middle East, Fathy's career took a predominantly opposite turn from peasantism to elitism. In this period when in the Middle East everything Islamic started to gain importance, Fathy's Islamic villa and palace architecture became famous. Supported by royal and elite patronage, the focus of Fathy's philosophy shifted from peasant architecture to Arabo-Islamic architecture. This was paralleled by the commission of a number of architectural projects, which were influenced by Fathy's definition of the Arab house. The hybridization of Nubian mud brick vault and dome with the elements from the Cairene houses led to an Islamic image of the house and palace architecture. This Islamicization of both the architectural design and philosophy characterizes this period of Fathy's career.

⁸⁴ Dr. Abdel Baki Ibrahim, "Arab Architecture ...Between the Locality and University," in *Alam Al Bena*, May 1982 p. 3

houses led to an Islamic image of the house and palace architecture. This Islamicization of both the architectural design and philosophy characterizes this period of Fathy's career.

In 1980, Fathy received the prestigious Chairman's Award from the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for his lifelong commitment to *Islamic* architecture. The Award was given to him in recognition of his "re adaptation of pre industrial buildings , understanding their climatic efficiency and to re appropriation of these traditional forms into the contemporary practice for architecture."⁸⁵ Supported by the Aga Khan Award for architecture a monograph was published in the series "The Architects from the Third World"⁸⁶ which put Fathy in the company of other noted architects like Geoffrey Bawa, Sedad Hakim Eldem and Charles Correa, who also had been looking for an exclusive culturally rooted identity for their own cultures. This recognition portrayed him as an architect of the non-Western world searching for an authentic cultural identity.

The seminal influence of Fathy's design philosophy on the architectural profession in the Middle East is evident in the work of his successors and followers. As Curtis has pointed out Fathy's concept of Islamic architecture has become a way of legitimizing the stylistic appropriation of the Islamic motifs. Curtis writes," Though no fault of Fathy's own, his ideas - or rather his images--have been appropriated as a sort of instant identity kit; a piece of acceptable costume to show that one is doing the right thing."⁸⁷ One of Fathy's ardent followers Egyptian architect Abdel Wahed El Wakil closely follows Fathy's footsteps in his designs. The close resemblance between Hassan Fathy's project for the palace in Tabouk in Saudi Arabia and El Wakil's al-Sulaiman Palace at Jeddah speaks of the ideogram they share regarding the concept of Islamic domestic architecture.(Fig 15, 16, 17a,17b, 18a&18b) El-Wakil echoes Fathy's thesis about revival in Islamic architecture on the basis of traditional and cultural authenticity saying," Revival is not imitation because imitation is when you are clinging to the past. . . I am *recreating* the past . . . The people who speak of imitating are the people who are imitating the West."⁸⁸

A less publicized successor in the contemporary Egyptian professional realm of is Mohammad Al- Husseiney, whose villa on Bitter Lake, Suez Canal, is a formal interpretation of Fathy's philosophy of domestic architecture.⁸⁹(Fig. 19a & 19b) Built in 1989, it closely follows Fathy's

⁸⁵ "Hassan Fathy : Chairman's Award" in *Architecture and Community*,1983.

⁸⁶ *Hassan Fathy* published in the series "Architecture in the Third World"-A Mimar Book, 1985.

⁸⁷ William Curtis, " Towards an Authentic Regionalism", Mimar19, 1986.

⁸⁸ El Wakil as cited in *Arts and The Islamic World*, Vol.1,No 4,1983-84.

⁸⁹ See Mimar 39, p.54-59

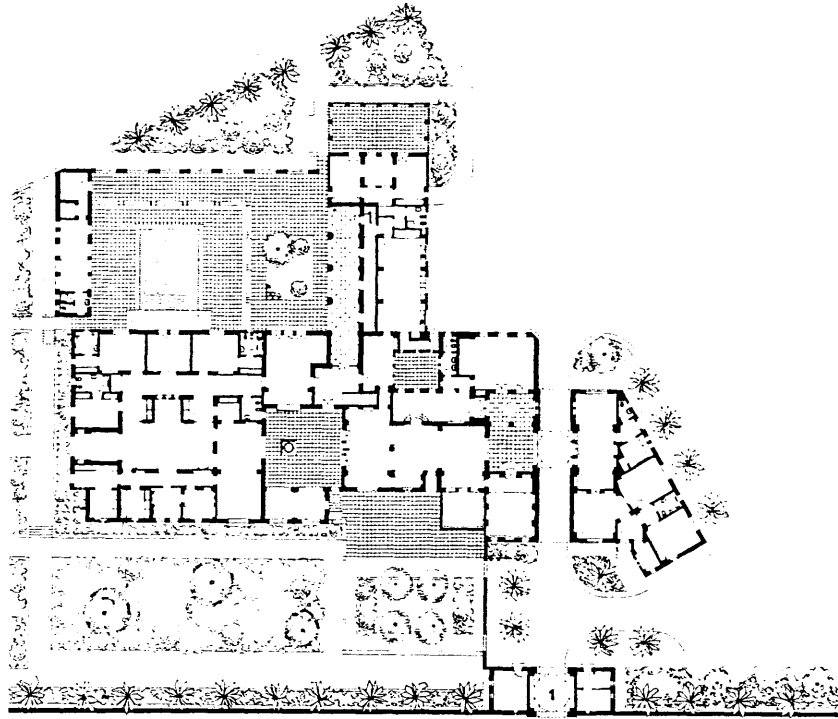


Fig. 15. Plan Al- Sulaiman Palace at Jeddah

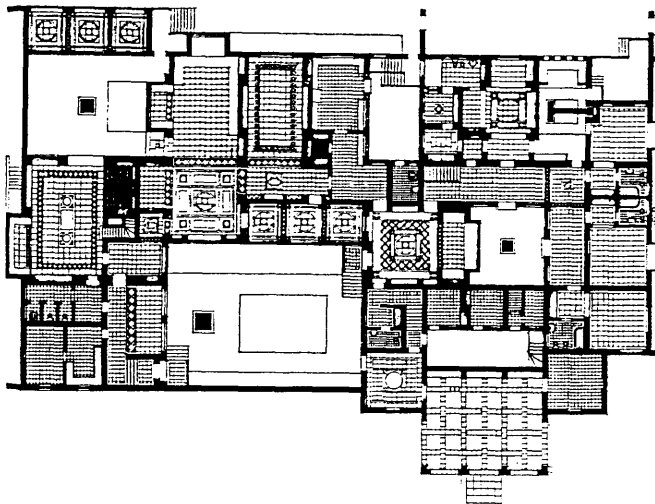


Fig. 16 Plan VIP Palace at Tabouk, Saudi Arabia

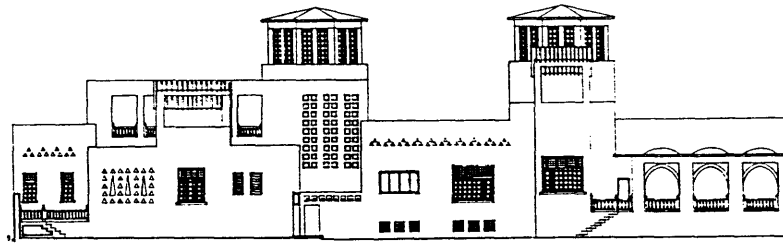


Fig. 17a Elevation VIP Palace, Tabouk

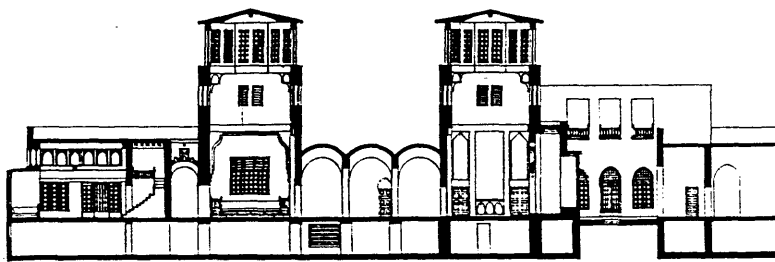


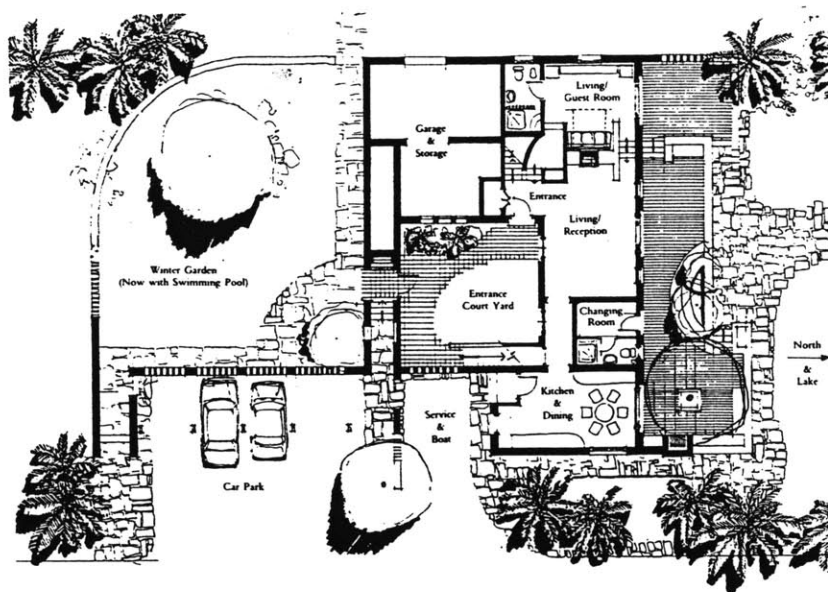
Fig. 17b Section VIP Palace , Tabouk



Fig. 18a Elevation Al- Sulaiman Palace, Jeddah



Fig. 18b Section Al-Sulaiman Palace, Jeddah



Ground floor plan.

Fig. 19a Ground Floor Plan, Bitter Lake Villa

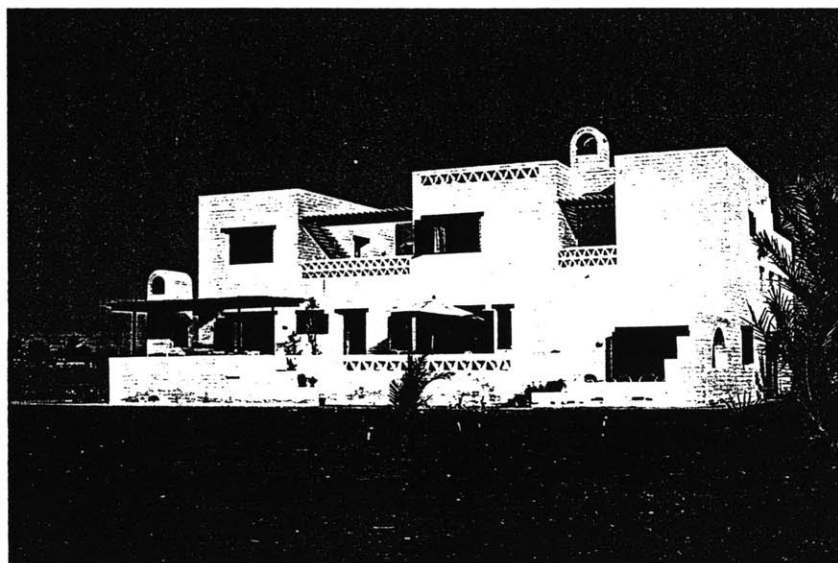


Fig. 19b North Elevation , Bitter Lake Villa

interpretation of the Arab house, inward looking and using *mushrabiya* with the pure whiteness of Nubian vernacular. The appropriation of Fathy's design idiom shows the widespread influence Fathy has on the recent development of domestic architecture in the Middle East. Fathy's design vocabulary is has become common in the Middle East, which finds its authentication in the philosophy of Fathy. In the context of Egyptian architecture, Fathy's influence is seminal both in the scholarship and in the profession of architecture in the Middle East. This acceptance of Fathy in Egypt is based on his search for cultural identity which coincides with the larger context of the post-colonial search for identity . Fathy's philosophy matches the post-colonial rhetoric of exclusive identity, believed to be rooted in the matters indigenous and folkloric. The philosophy of Fathy, though controversial, had been revered by a wide range of audience. Considered quarantined from the crude realities of practice, Fathy's idealized social vision is seen as a departing point for the search of the indigenously rooted architectural expression for the nonwestern societies. As William Curtis hopes, "The philosophy of Fathy seems to have special relevance to this question of re-invigoration of ancient craft wisdom," a recognition of the *vernacularism* that characterizes the wider context of the post colonial identity search.⁹⁰ The architectural ideology of Fathy is seen as a venue for raising the issues of cultural identity giving a direction to nonwestern architecture. The vernacularism of Fathy's philosophy is considered appropriate in the larger context of the post-colonial identity search. The definition of the Arab house can be seen as a part of a larger cultural agenda in the context of Arab Nationalism.

The Emergence of the Arab House and context of Pan Arabism

The late 40s was a traumatic political era for Egypt and the neighboring Arab countries. Following the defeat of the 1948 war and the establishment of the state of Israel, emerged a radical Arab Nationalism. Political observers attribute it to the defeat in the 1948 war and the strong leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. The combined effect of these two factors acted as the main catalyst of the vast popularization of the concept of Arab Nationalism. Carl Leiden observes, "Nasser and Israel were the symbiotic catalysts for the Arab Nationalism that bloomed with fervor and excitement in the 1950s and 1960s and which still exists although in diminished form."⁹¹ Egypt played a leading role in the of Arab Nationalism due to its size ,the strategic location and Nasser's leadership. One of the main political agenda of Nasser was

⁹⁰ William Curtis in *Mimar* 19,1986.

⁹¹ cited by Elie Chahala, "Arab Nationalism: a Bibliographical Eassay" in *Pan Arabism and Arab Nationalism*, p.43

strong anti-Westernism. Nasser defied all Western objection and made an important arms deal with the Communist bloc in 1955, nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956 and engaged in the war with the French, British and Israeli forces that attacked Egypt in 1956. This anti-Westernism gave Nasser widespread popularity and credibility in the Arab countries as he became the champion of Pan Arab solidarity. After the defeat of the 1967 war which was undertaken by Egypt, Syria and Jordan on behalf of the Arab nations, Egypt tried to balance its radical Arabism and renewed Egyptianism. However, Nasser personally remained a strong promoter of Pan Arabism.

The aspects of the Arab countries that Nasser tried to appeal to are the Arabic language, history and culture. The shared heritage of the Arab countries was highlighted to establish and assert an Arab political identity. The concept of Pan Arabism was based on the belief that all those who are Arab by language, history and territory can form a political entity to resist Western intervention. The reactive nature of Pan Arabism was an aftermath of the defeat in the 1948 Palestine war which generated a threat of extinction in the Arab countries. The 1948 Arab defeat is characterized by a political writer, "Palestine symbolized the failure of the Arab Nationalism to meet the supreme challenge: the challenge of national survival.... Under the threat of extinction as symbolized by Palestine, Arab nationalism reasserted itself ..."92. The Pan Arabism thus tried to create a homogeneous identity as a resistance to the threat of Western intervention.

This reactive Pan Arab identity therefore found its basis in the indigenous aspects of the Arab countries and glorified the language, religion, history as the unifying elements. Thus in defining Pan Arabism Jacques Berque reflects,

" It conceals an almost incantatory force, a prestige so out of proportion to any material basis that the causes of this transcendence must be sought else where than in stark objectivity. They doubtless, lie in a past which marries to the glory of its conquests the classicism of its language and the integrity of its creed."93

This alludes to the basic components that are cited to justify the political homogeneity of the Arab countries. To authenticate the concept of Arab Nationalism these aspects were emphasized. Common heritage regarding Arab territory, ethnicity and language was recalled to justify the relatively novel concept of Pan Arab identity.

92 ibid p.22

93 ibid p.xi

The authenticating function of an Arab heritage is not a phenomenon exclusive to the post-war era of 1948 related to the resurgence of radical Arab Nationalism. Albert Hourani recognizes three main types of overlapping nationalism in the Middle East at different phases in the period between 1798 -1939.⁹⁴ Chronologically arranged Hourani terms them as religious nationalism, territorial nationalism and ethnic or linguistic nationalism. Hourani's definitions are important in order to understand Fathy's use of the term the *Arab house*. Religious nationalism is based on the assertion that the people who shared a common religion belong to a natural political community. In an extended sense it also refers to the common inheritance of a cultural system, habits and social norms beyond the religious doctrine. Territorial nationalism is based on a sense of community rooted in the sharing and allegiance to a common geographical territory. Ethnic or linguistic nationalism is based on the belief that common language constitutes a single nationhood. This became one of the strongest political agenda in the Middle East in assertion of a Pan Arabist identity.

Hassan Fathy's architectural ideology blooming in the political environment of Pan Arabism thus speaks about an *imagined community* in Benedict Anderson's sense. The concept of Pan Arab community is bound by a limited yet elastic boundary encompassing a huge population of unstratified Arab societies tied together by deep uniformity of religion and language. The basic assumption is the Arab community can be an independent alternative to the West, when the very birth of the concept lies as a reaction to the West. The assertion of a self contained Arab identity characterizes Fathy's definition of the term *Arab*. Though used in a multivalent manner it categorically speaks about a Pan-Arab community which shares a singular architectural language that expresses a common cultural root. The term "Arab house" is a relatively late coinage in Fathy's career. It distinctively emerged in his writing in 1969 in his publication *New Gournia - A Tale of Two Villages* in the time when his village experiment was given national importance in Egypt, under Nasser's regime. Fathy's earlier publications in *Ekistics* in 1964 and 1966 do not assign nationality to architecture (Arab, Islamic etc.) though speaking about traditional domestic architecture in the Arab context.⁹⁵ Therefore the construction of the image of the Arab house closely follows the political context of Arabism in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

⁹⁴ Albert Hourani in *Arabic thought in the liberal age* p.341-342

⁹⁵ See "Model Houses for El Dareeya Saudi Arabia", *Ekistics* 21 (1966) and "An Ekistic Approach to the Problem of Roofing in Peasant House Building" *Ekistics* 17,(1964)

This Arabism in Fathy's philosophy is a prominent and constant theme. The paper Fathy delivered at the Al-Azhar University in 1967 titled "What is a City?"⁹⁶ shows the importance Fathy attaches to the Arab identity. Discussing the planner's role in city planning in the Arab context, he asks, among several questions, "Is he a true Arab, or has he been greatly influenced by what he has read in the textbooks and trade journals?"⁹⁷ Regarding the citizen for whom the city is being planned, Fathy inquires, "If he is an Arab, is his sense of beauty in architecture true to his Arabism, or is he influenced by propaganda relating any development solely to foreign influence and backwardness to everything Arabic?"⁹⁸ The line of inquiry clearly asserts the importance Fathy places on the Arab identity in the larger political context. Necessarily this Arabism tries to counter the possible Western influence on Egyptian Architecture and also to offer an alternative idealized solution to the problems facing the Middle East. The recent publication on Fathy in an architectural monograph clearly discusses this prominent supranationalism as a central theme of Fathy's philosophy. The anti-Westernism of the *Arab Renaissance* is discussed,

The nascent Arabism in art and architecture . . . has undeniably arrived. The words 'Western or 'Westernization' now hold much of the same negative meaning in the Middle East today that 'Gothic' must have in Renaissance Italy, and for many of the same reasons. In the present case the animosity behind the title may be the result of a Pan-Arabian anti-Westernism arising from virtually unanimous dismay over the concrete wasteland left in the wake of the oil boom.'⁹⁹

Both from Fathy's assertive definition of the Arab identity and subsequent appraisal from the British architectural press it is evident that the definition of the Arab identity is defined in terms of its degree of anti-Westernism. Frequently Fathy blames the presence of Western colonialism in the 19th century as initiating the process of Westernism in the architectural and urban scenario of Egypt. The blame is placed on the attempt of modernization by Khedive Mohammad Ali which is seen as causing a cultural rupture in the context of Egyptian architecture - a cultural rupture that can be reversed by a return to cultural rootedness.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Hassan Fathy, Paper delivered at the Al-Azhar University, Cairo in 1967 published in James Steele, *Hassan Fathy*

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p.23

¹⁰⁰ Hassan Fathy, in *The Arab House in the Urban Setting* p.10

The Roots for a Culturally Valid Image

Culture as defined by Fathy results from the interaction between man and his environment to satisfy his physical and spiritual needs. The commonality of the environment thus leads to a common cultural heritage. Environmental rationalization therefore reinforces the idea of the Arab house as the expression of Arab culture. In constructing the image of the house, Fathy used the term *Arab* to connote primarily the territorial component of the Arab identity. The geographical territoriality in the depiction of the Arab house is interpreted in terms of common climatic zone. So the homogeneous architectural expression is seen as a result of the shared environment of the desert climate. Fathy with exactitude defines the territorial area as belonging to "One stretch of land between latitude 10° -35° North which extends from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean in the West."¹⁰¹ The geographical definition suggests a common climatic zone which justifies the use of the courtyard, mushrabiya and malqaf in the house as the characteristic identity elements of the Arab house. The scientific research on the environmental validity of the traditional elements is a process of going back to the roots, as Fathy states,

"Designing in the Arab style for today presents the architect with various intricate problems. Architectural design becomes some sort of scientific research. For many reasons this style has been abandoned and left stagnant for more than 200 years. So, The architect willing to come back to that style and bring it up to date has to fill the gap and catch up with what should have been done during this lapse of time were it normally developing"¹⁰²

Thus Fathy brings in scientific climatic analysis for the Arab house as a way of justifying its cultural validity. Fathy's latter publication "Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture" published in 1986, brings the scientific environmental analysis to the various components of the courtyard house. The various spatial components of the Arab house is represented with emphasis on their climatic sophistication. By scientifically validating the courtyard house Fathy thus appeals to a territorial affiliation among the countries of the Middle East.

The selection of precedents therefore shows Fathy's intention of establishing the courtyard type house as the archetype which is both culturally and climatic ally valid. In his search for authentic cultural roots for an ideal type of Arab house Hassan Fathy looked at both the urban and the rural examples -- the urban upper class examples from Cairo and the vernacular houses

¹⁰¹ ibid p.1

¹⁰²Hassan Fathy cited in "Hassan Fathy: Chairman's Award" in *Architecture and Community*, 1983

from the Nubian villages. The urban examples are predominantly from Egypt with occasional reference to other countries like Iraq and Tunis. The vernacular residential architecture of Gharb Aswan predominantly influenced him in development of the design vocabulary for the Arab house. In 1941, Fathy visited this area and was impressed by the indigenous character of its residential architecture. Common in both the urban and the rural types, is the courtyard creating an inward looking character of the house. A brief discussion of various precedents is important to understand the common characteristics of these residences.

The Nubian Vernacular

The design idiom of the Arab house, as perpetuated by Hassan Fathy shows the Nubian vernacular architecture as its predecessor. Particularly two of the Nubian villages, Aboul Riche and Gharb Aswan influenced Fathy's works. As mentioned in the *Architecture for the Poor*, Fathy's search for a culturally rooted architectural idiom led him to the vernacular architecture at Aswan. Fathy writes about his encounter with the architecture of Gharb Aswan, "I knew that I had found what I had come for".¹⁰³ This predetermined image in Fathy's mind about culturally pure and authentic architectural expression is a point of interest. This return to vernacular and folk culture for authentic tradition is a marked characteristic of the post colonial search for pure national identity. Clifford Geertz in discussing the post nation state post-colonial identity search, recognizes vernacularism as one marked attempt to stabilize, homogenize and establish the notion of nationhood.¹⁰⁴ The novelty of the created nationhood is thus attempted to be balanced by the antiquarian appeal to indigenous culture. The folk culture is zealously celebrated with the belief that traditional and cultural purity lies in the rural regions. Geertz defines this as a typical aftermath of decolonization in the latter stage where identity is based on aspects of folk culture uncorrupted by foreign presence. Folk architecture in case of Fathy, is significant as the alternative to Western architecture. His anti-Westernism led to the urban vernacularism which found expression in his architecture. The search for an alternative to the mass Westernism in architecture and urban design led Fathy to a rural vocabulary of the mud brick dome and vaults of the Nubian countryside.

The Nubian examples though widely different in details show certain common characteristics. According to Fernea, these are courtyard houses with a distinct separation between the public and the private spaces.¹⁰⁵ The layers of living spaces and the high walls around the courtyard

¹⁰³Hassan Fathy *Architecture for the Poor* p.6

¹⁰⁴ Clifford Geertz *The interpretation of Culture* p. 243

¹⁰⁵ Robert A.Fernea in *Nubians in Egypt:Peaceful People*

create the domestic privacy. To retain the privacy the guest rooms are located at the outermost layer and opens on to the public space outside. The lack of openings in the domestic spaces distinguishes them from the guest rooms. Additional visitors spaces are also accommodated in the outer layer. Such layering of spaces shows the high value attached to the privacy of the inner areas of the house. Thus the outer layer serves as a transitional zone of visual obstruction from the public realm. Guests are usually entertained in the outside space furnished with a low mud seat around the periphery of the house called the *mastaba*. *Mastabas* are also built inside the courtyard reserved for family gatherings. The complete enclosure of the courtyard and the creation of a outer mastaba shows the value placed on the separation of the inner and outer spaces - the male and female zones of activities. A closer discussion of some Southern Nubian houses will demonstrate the importance of the courtyard in maintaining privacy.

The house at *Farriq*, East Bank shows the interiorized character through its spatial arrangements. (Fig. 20) The main approach to the house is through a long staircase rising from the river bank. It serves as the principal approach, while a secondary entrance is situated on the opposite side of the courtyard. The entrance halls at both the entries serve as a transitional zone between the male and the female activity areas. The location of cooking , stable, poultry defines the courtyard as the woman's activity zone, which is separated from the guest and the visitor area. The courtyard is thus completely sealed off from the exterior by a high wall on the south. The other two examples are also situated at the East Bank at *Farriq*. (Fig. 21a & 21b). It is distinct from the earlier examples with the absence of the intermediate layer between the entrance door and the courtyard. However the guest space is situated at the outer periphery and this is the only space from which the windows open to the outside. The existence of an open sitting platform or *mastaba* defines the public zone of interaction. The courtyard is also surrounded by high wall on the south and this lends a highly introverted character to the house. The house at *Aboul Riche* is a two storey house with a centralized arrangement around a courtyard (Fig.22) The privacy of the courtyard is maintained by enclosing spaces and a high wall on the western side. The importance of privacy is seen in the treatment of the wall as it follows the line of the vision along the staircase.

The above examples of the Nubian vernacular houses (Fig.23&24) point to the importance attached to the interior looking character and the need of enclosure. The work space for the female members is protected visually from the public zone outside. The social systems of

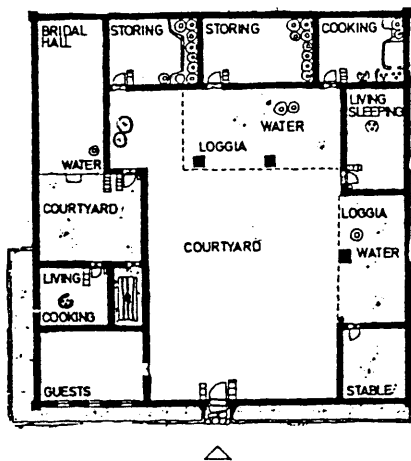


Fig. 21a. House at Farriq, East Bank

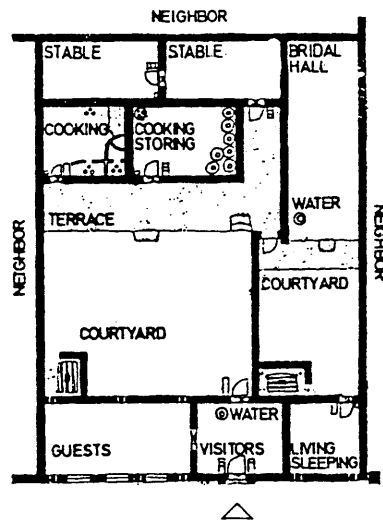


Fig. 21b. House at Farriq, East Bank

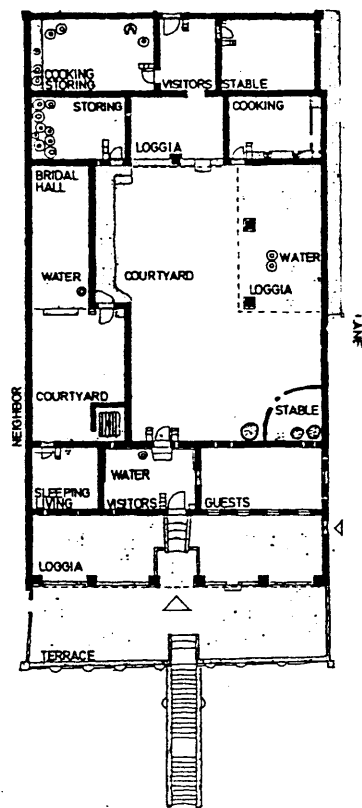


Fig. 20. House at Farriq, East Bank

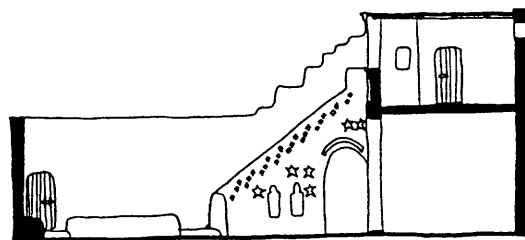
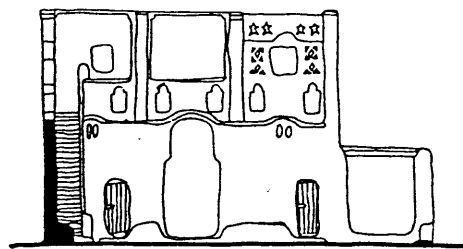


Fig. 22 House at Aboul Riche



Fig. 23. Houses in Nubian Village

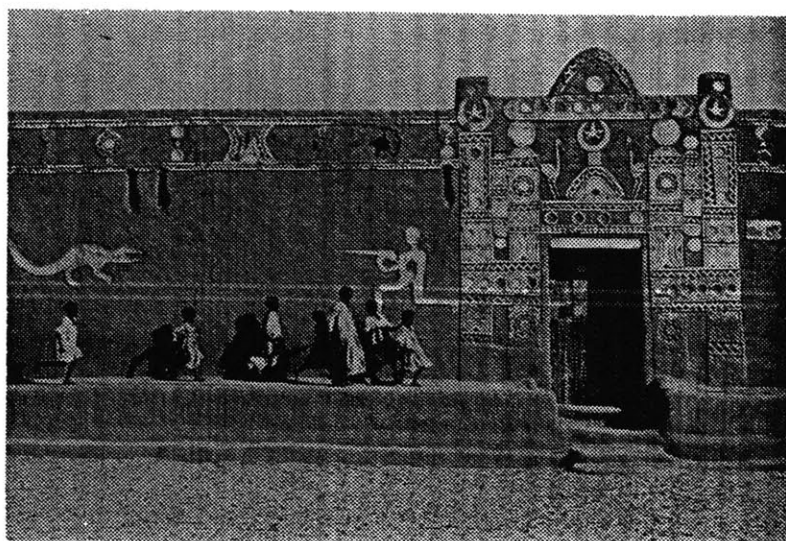


Fig 24. The *Mastaba* in front of Nubian Houses

separation of genders in these types of houses are noted by Fathy in the *Architecture for the Poor* as he describes the woman's separate day in the village market. This is the only day during the week, Fathy states, when they can leave the *confines* of the house and enjoy freedom. The existence of the hammam also provides them an opportunity to escape from the *restriction* of the house. Therefore Fathy's choice of the Nubian vernacular precedents preempts the recognition of the spatial segregation of the genders.

The Urban Precedents

The urban predecessors of the Arab house vary from reconstruction of some 10th century houses in Fustat (Fig.25) to 18th-century Ottoman Cairene houses. Though certain aspect of each house is highlighted to substantiate different advantages, together they serve a central thesis of climatic sophistication of the Arab house. These are all single family urban dwellings with a particular type of spatial relationship in their courtyard ensemble. This spatial arrangement is described by Fathy as a development from the early types of sedentarized Arab houses. As the examples of the houses proceed chronologically the ensemble becomes more complex and elaborate. However all the houses with the distinct climatic control devices like the lattice window or *mushrabiya* and the windcatcher or *malqaf*, are built around a central courtyard. This central courtyard is the basic criterion for defining the Arab house in Fathy. In terms of environmental control, these three basic architectural spatial elements are given prime importance with reference to their climatic validity in the context of the Arab territorial zone. Though most of the examples are Cairene houses from the 12th to the 18th century, Fathy draws some other courtyard type houses from Tunis (*Dar Lajimi*) (Fig. 26a) and Iraq (*Al-Ukhaidar Palace*) (Fig. 26b) and to allude to the concept of a shared climatic territory.

One of the earliest houses is the *Qaa ad -Dardir* (Fig. 27) located near the mausoleum of Sultan Al - Ghuri. This is one of the few surviving examples of the 12th century Fatimid residences. The central structuring element is a large covered hall or *qa'a* with two flanking alcoves or *iwans*. It shows the typical spatial relationship between the *qa'a* and the *iwans* on which Fathy bases his thesis of the courtyard ensemble in the Arab house. The central part of this spatial ensemble called the *doorqa'a* is one step lower in section than the two iwans. The

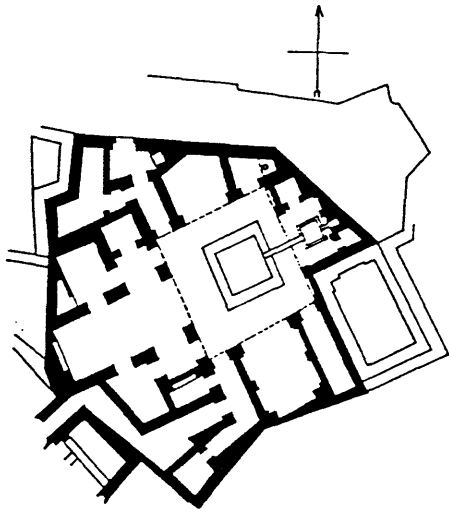


Fig. 25. Reconstruction of 10th Century Houses at Fustat

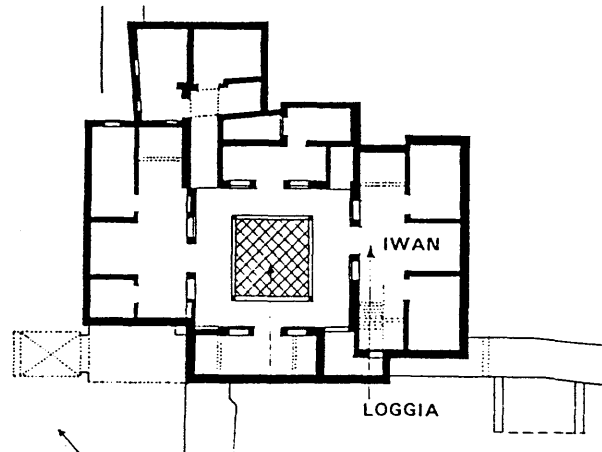


Fig. 26a. House at Tunis (Dar Lajimi)

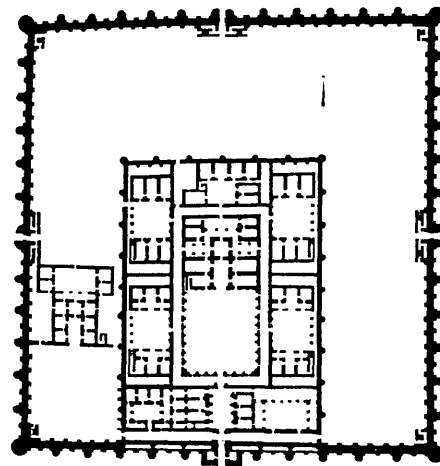
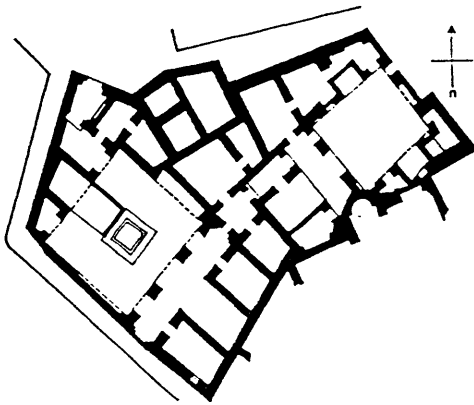


Fig. 26b. Al Okhaider Palace, Kerbala Iraq (778 A.D.)

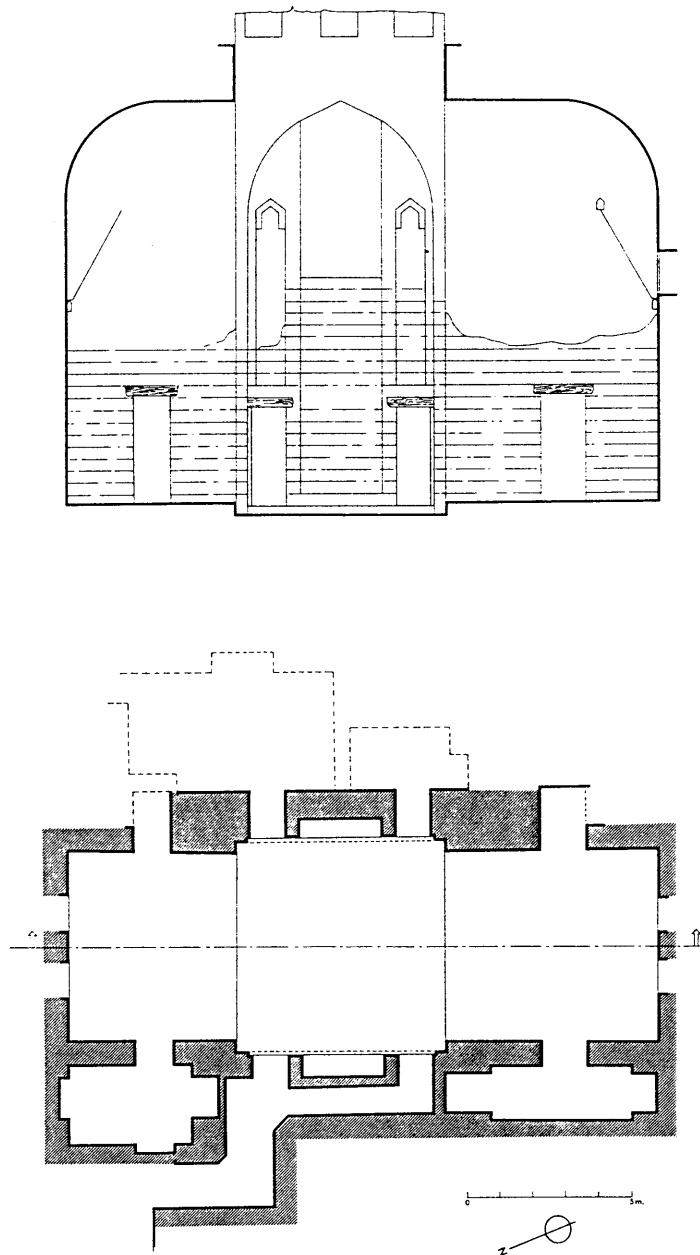


Fig. 27 Qa'a ad Dardir, Cairo early 12th Century

doorqaa is covered by a high tower with the two *iwans* having lower ceiling height. The changes in section is thus considered to facilitate ventilation. From this basic spatial relationship Fathy constructs the standard arrangement of a peasant's house in his design for New Gurna. Though houses are of a reduced scale the basic relationship of the central and the peripheral spaces remain the same from the *qa'a* of Fatimid Cairo to the contemporary peasant house at New Gurna.

Another example that Fathy had studied and drawn inspiration from is the *Bayt Muhibb-al-Din Muwaqqi'*. In 1350 A. D., (Fig. 28 & 29) it was built on the site of a large royal complex known as the Eastern Palace located at the main intersection of *Al-Muizz Street* and the approach to *Bayt al Qadi*. This intersection of the square is called *Bein al-Qasriyn* meaning 'between the two palaces' indicating the existence of the palace complex in the vicinity. The notable feature of this palace is the presence of the wind tower or *malqaf*, that makes it distinct from the earlier examples that Fathy studied. The climatic aspect as defined by Fathy is the change in environment control by the introduction of the wind tower or *malqaf*. The *malqaf* through several layers of openings, admits the northern breeze into the big hall or *qa'a*. The air is further cooled by the fountain in the middle of the *doorqa'a*. The hot air moving upward is let out by the opening at the top of the tower. An extensive climatological survey of this house was carried out by a team from the Institute of the Third World Studies at the Architectural Association School in 1973 and served as the basis for Fathy's scientific validation of the Cairene example. The climatic aspect of this house have been documented in Fathy's later publication "Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture" based on scientific data of temperature, air velocity, relative humidity etc. gathered from the research.¹⁰⁶ This house with the *malqaf* is an important example for demonstrating the climatic validity of the old Cairene examples in the contemporary times.

The *Gamal al-Din Dahabi House*, built in 1637 during the Ottoman period, is located near the Al Azhar Mosque of medieval Cairo (Figs.30, 31,32 &33). In its spatial arrangement it resembles the early Fustat examples that Fathy uses as the earlier types of Arab houses. According to Steele, this is a favorite example of Hassan Fathy for its originality in retaining the basic spatial components of the Fustat type. This is an example of the affluent class Cairene residences as the owners name suggests, *Dahabi* means gold merchant. Like most of the houses belonging to the affluent class of this period, it is centered around a courtyard. One of the notable features of this residence is the spatial arrangement through which the privacy of the

¹⁰⁶Published in 1986 by University of Chicago Press.

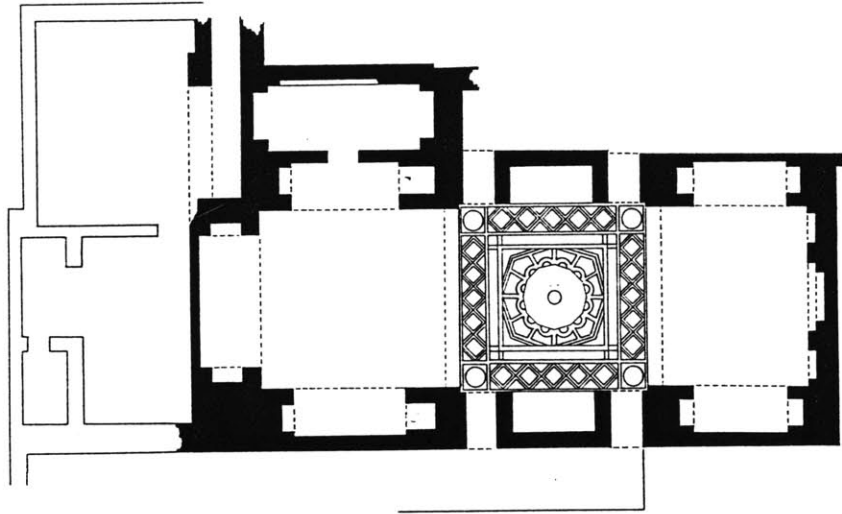


Fig. 28 Plan, House of Muhibb Al Din Muqqawi' (1350)

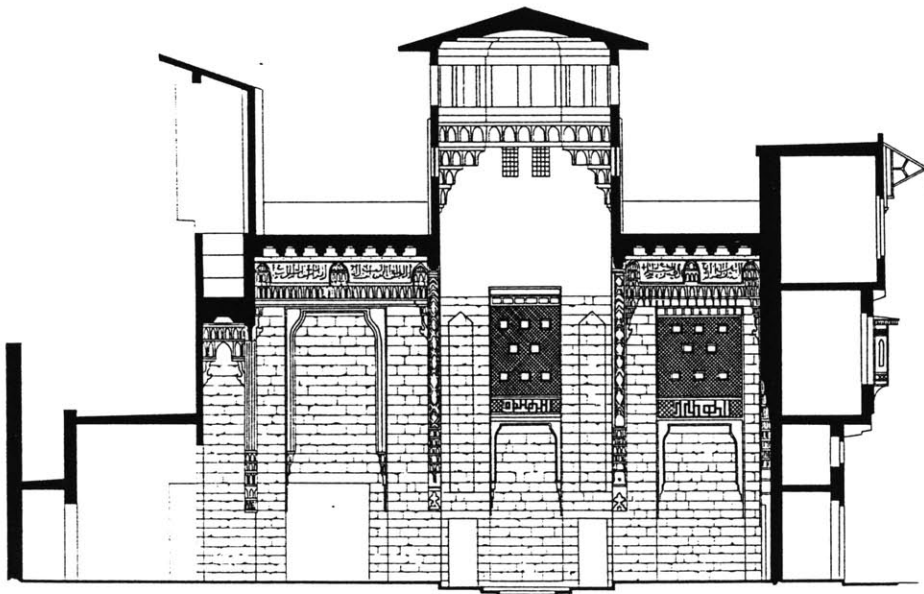
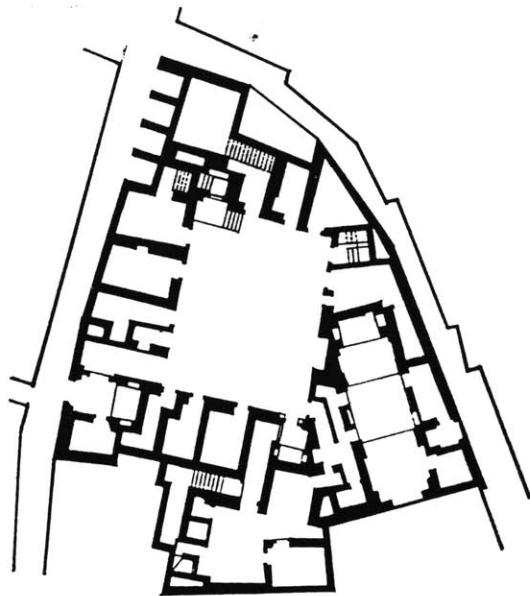


Fig. 29 Section, House of Muhibb Al Din Muqqawi' (1350)



Figs. 30 & 31. Ground and First Floor Plan,
House of Gamal Al Din Dahabi (1637)

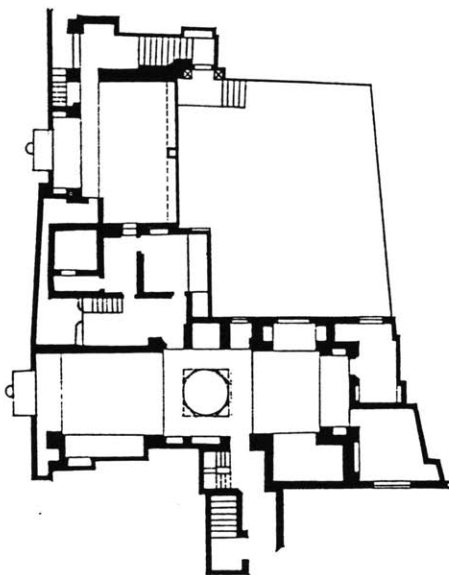


Fig. 32 View of the Upper Storey,
House of Gamal Al Din Dahabi

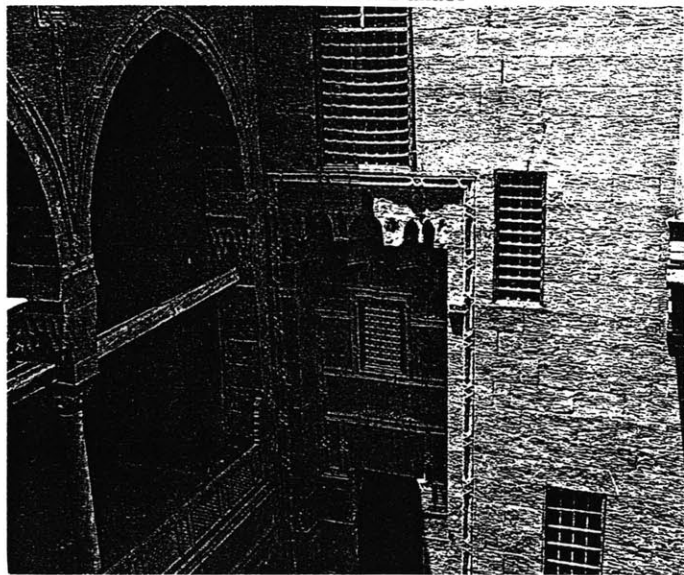


Fig 33 View of the Maqqad,
House of Gamal Al Din Dahabi

domestic spaces are retained, both from outside and within the house itself. The entrance from the street leading to the courtyard bends with a sharp change in angle obstructing the view from the outer public spaces. Intermediate between the entrance and the courtyard is the small room having *mastaba* or the seat for the gatekeeper. The courtyard at the ground floor is surrounded by a number of service rooms with the exception of a reception hall or *khanga* tucked away at the side of the courtyard. A flight of steps leading from the courtyard to the balcony or the *maqaad*, oriented to catch the northern wind. From the *maqaad* an entrance led to a central hall or at the same level which eventually led to the *harem* or woman's quarter at an upper level. This mechanism of the layering of spaces to retain privacy is the most notable feature of the house.

Another popularized image of the Cairene house is represented by the *Bayt Souhami*, an upper middle class residence on the *Darb Al Azhar* (Fig.34). This house originally built in 1648 by Sheikh Zain al Din Abdel hay et Tabaoui and was extended in 1796 by Ahmad al-Souhami to combine two residences. As a result it has two courtyards connected by a ground floor loggia called the *takhtaboosh*. (Fig 35 & 36). The image of this formal composition of a high aesthetic value has been widely used by publications on medieval Cairo. This picturesque architectural composition have been used by Fathy and other publications as an example of the typical medieval Cairene house.¹⁰⁷

The Souhami house like its Ottoman contemporaries shows a distinct separation of the male quarters the *salamlik* and the female quarters the *haramlik* (Figs. 37 & 38) A recent study of the Ottoman houses in, points to the existence of distinct separation of the *haramlik* and the *salamlik*.¹⁰⁸ The male quarter of the Souhami residence is thus shown as consisting of the *maqaad* (the open first floor loggia), the *takhtaboosh* (the ground floor loggia separating the two courtyards) and the *mandara* (the male reception hall).

¹⁰⁷ Along with the Bayt Muhibb al Din Muwagga' this house was also analyzed by the Architectural association School team in 1973 for its climatic aspects. It was preserved by the Committee for the conservation of Monuments of Arabic Art. Bayt Souhami has a variety of examples of the wooden treatment of the *mushrabiya* screen. The sophisticated wooden work of the *mushrabiya*s had been studied by one of Fathy's disciples and his study is often quoted by Fathy in his climatic analysis of the *mushrabiya*. Dr. Omar El Farouk in the late sixties, did a doctoral dissertation at the Architectural Association School in 1961 on the *mushrabiya*s of the Souhami house. The climatic advantages of the different elements such as the courtyard, *mushrabiya* and the *Takhtaboosh* of the Bayt al Souhami house became a focus in the recent discussion on the domestic architecture in the Islamic countries.

¹⁰⁸ See *Palais et Maison Du Caire*: vol. II *Epoque Ottoman (xvi'-xviii' siècles)*

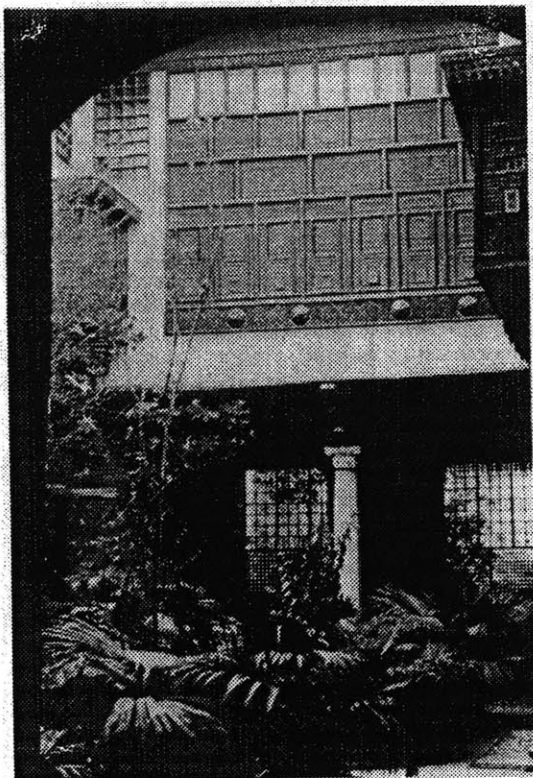


Fig. 35 View of the Takhtaboosh,
Souhami House

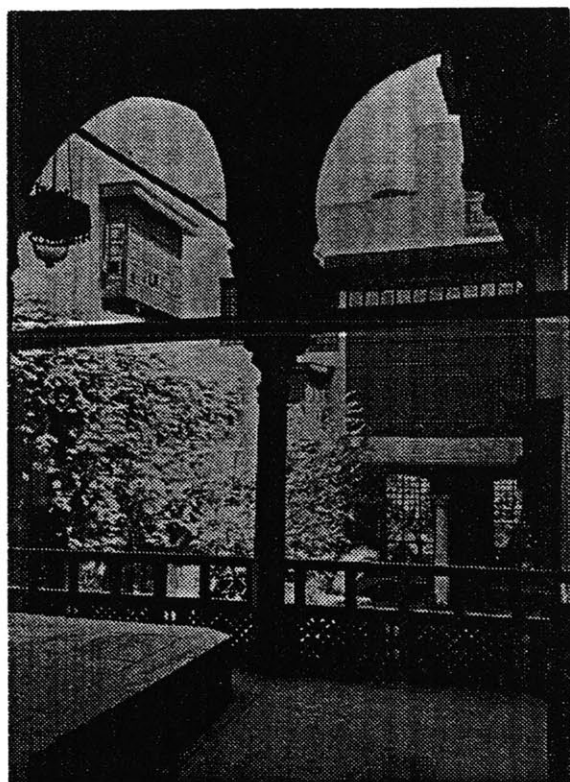


Fig. 36 View of the Maqa'aad ,
Souhami house

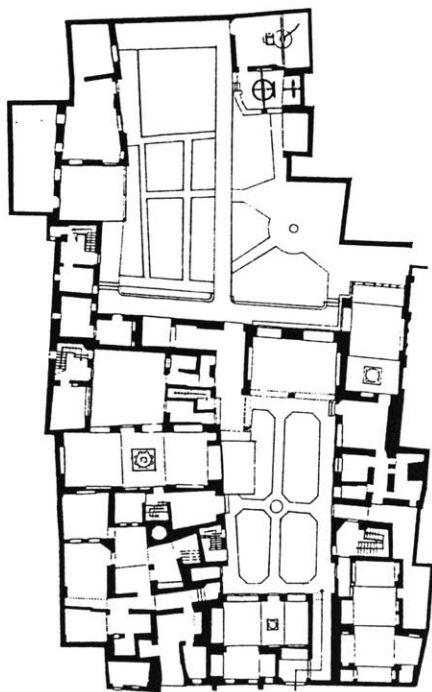


Fig. 37 Ground Floor Plan, Souhami house

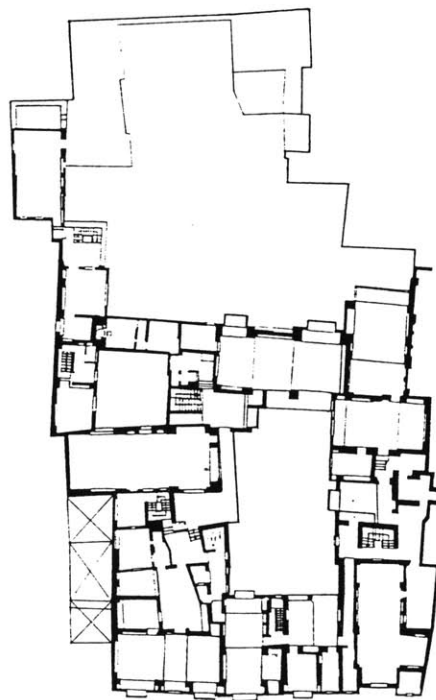


Fig. 38 First Floor Plan

This has been recognized as a distinctive feature of the Ottoman ruling class residences by a recent publication. Nohad A. Toulou attributes this segregative aspect to the Ottoman rule, observing,

When Egypt fell to the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, the separation between the two parts became a dominant feature in the design of houses; and many of the wealthy families even maintained separate structures. The woman's quarter became known as the *haramlik* and those for men, the *salamlik*. In Cairo the practice of physically separating the two quarters was never widespread except among the Turkish elites of the ruling class.¹⁰⁹

What is relevant in the above observation is the gender segregative aspects of the elite Ottoman residences of which *Bayt Souhami* is an established example. One of the main social role that the spatial arrangement performs is the separation of genders. The distinct quarters are separated by the elaborate indirect access system, assignment of different floor levels to the different quarters, screening of the female quarter by the lattice window and similar spatial devices and details.

Adjacent to the Ibn Tulun Mosque, (Fig.39) the *Bayt al-Kiridliyyah* (1631) is notable for the distinct separation of the *haramlik* or the woman's quarter and *salamlik* or the male quarter. The two parts of the house are separated by a wide entrance corridor leading from an exterior courtyard or *ziyadah* of the Ibn Tulun mosque. Several highly convoluted entries led to the private family areas on the north side of the central corridor and the male quarter on the south. Both the parts have their own courtyards while the *maq'aad* belongs to the family quarter. As in the previous two examples a staircase led from the courtyard to the *maq'aad* and finally to the core of the family area or the harem. The man's on the second floor has a staircase of its own which leads from the courtyard. The reception hall on the third floor was reserved for the honored male guests, running the entire length of which is the woman's gallery upstairs with *musrabiya* screens. This elaborate arrangement allowed the visual separation of the woman from the male space where important functions were usually held. (Fig.40) A main characteristic of the Ottoman elite houses, the elaborate system of careful segregation of genders, is thus literally expressed in the example of *Bayt al-Kiridliyyah*. (Fig.41 & 42)

The urban examples, those Fathy used for the development of his concept of the Arab house, have certain notable features in common. The concentration of the houses along an important

¹⁰⁹ Nohad A. Toulou, *Housing in the Arid Lands: Design and Planning*, p.77

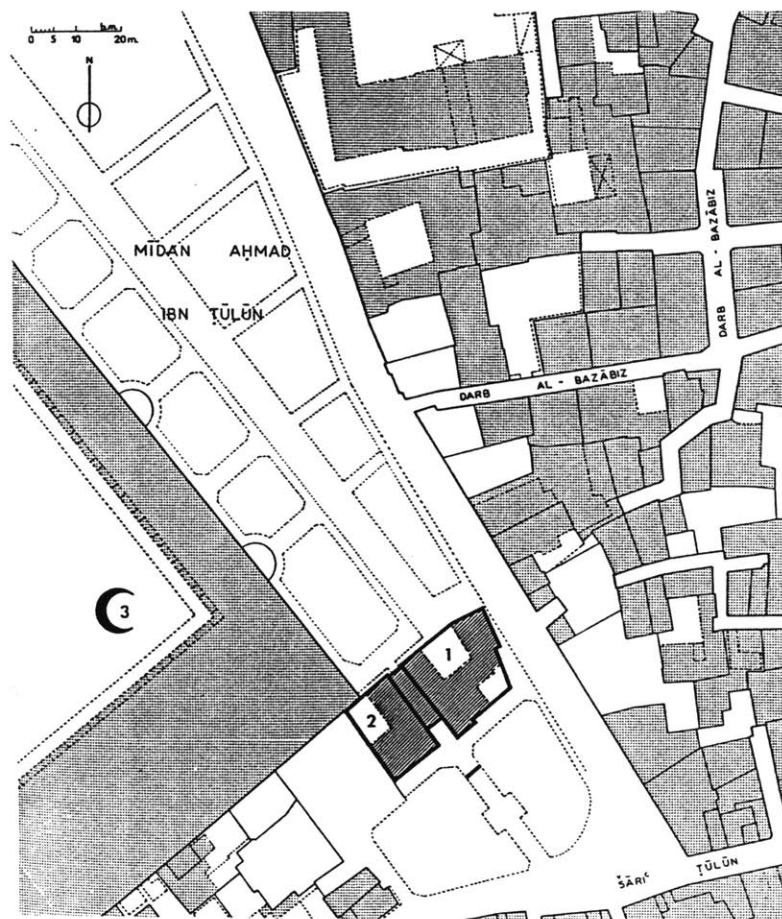


Fig. 39 Map showing the location of Bayt Al Kiridliyyah (1631)



Fig. 40 Ground, First, Second and third Floor Plan , Bayt Al Kiridliyyah (1631)

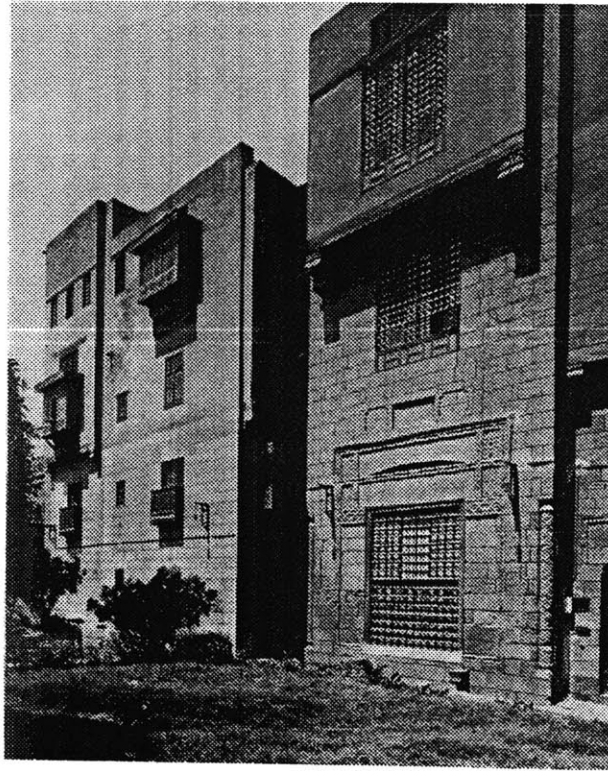


Fig. 41 Exterior View, Bayt Al Kiridliyyah

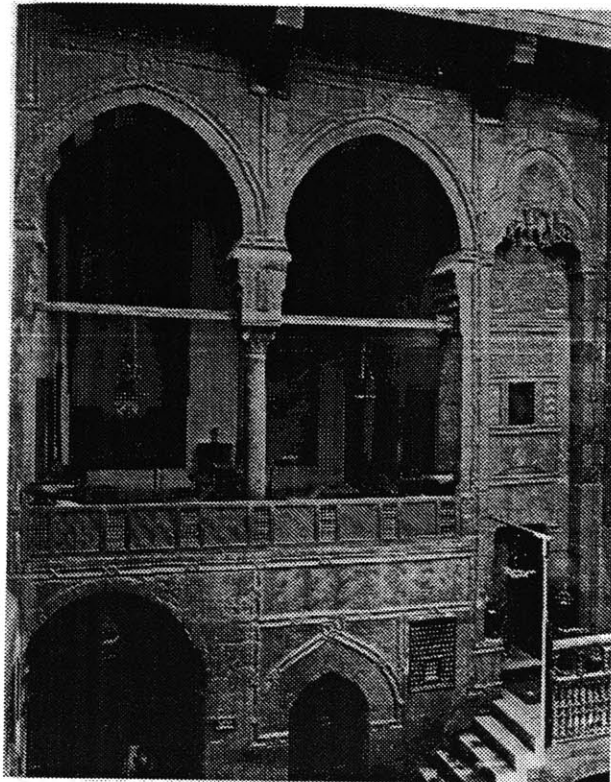


Fig. 42 View of the Maqa'aad, Bayt Al Kiridliyyah

north-south spine connecting the mosque Ibn Tulun and the mosque Al- Hakim of medieval Cairo suggests the social importance of the owners(Fig. 43). The main corpus of the precedents for Fathy is formed out of a particular type of single family elite residences. This type of residences with their climatic advantages also had elaborate spatial system of gender separation. The features which are common is the interiorized character arranged around a courtyard flanked by service facilities. Most of them had a harem quarter at the upper level ensuring protection against gender mix. The elements which are studied as having definite climatic advantages also supported the separation of the female inhabitants from the public and semi public areas of the house. The segregation of the sexes were maintained by both spatial and service arrangements. Janet Abu Lughod has observed that the affluent class urban residences of Cairo could segregate the female quarter from the male areas because of the presence of the female servants who could move between these two. This was mainly possible in the wealthy elite residences, as Janet Abu Lughod observes "The fact that the ideal of separation between sexes is best achieved by the wealthy who can afford to duplicate space and can afford the servants and slave girls who were never guarded from male sight or contact."¹¹⁰ The seclusion of woman in the elite family has been discussed by Nawal Al Messiri Nadim in her study of the block in Al-Sukkariyya known as Bayt-al-Bey. She discusses that the name and the nomenclature of the different section of the residence are indicative of the life which once took place in it. The house is divided into two sections; the salam lik and the haram lik. The latter has two subdivisions, harim awwal, the quarter of the senior wife and harim tani, the quarter of the junior wife. Such internal structure and social subdivision, according to Al Messiri Nadim, were common in the house of the elites throughout Cairo. In the same neighborhood quarter, the block called Bayt al- Sayh or al-Qayyati housed an important family belonging to the sufi order, al-Qayyatiyya. Though the woman of the household very close relation with the members of the sufi order in Qayyat, a village in upper Egypt, they were strictly separated from the neighborhood.¹¹¹

On the other hand in relatively lower middle class residences woman were never strictly secluded from the immediate neighborhood spaces. Judith Tucker observes the free access of the female inhabitants in the lower middle class residential quarters or *hara* from the evidence of a court case from nineteenth century Cairo . It records the dispute between two women in a popular

¹¹⁰ Janet Abu Lughod, "The Islamic City- Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance" in *IJMES*, vol.19, May 1987.

¹¹¹ See Nawal Al-Messiri Nadim's elaborate analysis "The Concept of the Hara: A Historical and Sociological Study of Al-Sukkariyya" in *Annales Islamologiques* XV.1979.pp.313-347

peripheral quarter al-Utuf, lying to the northeast of the Azhar and Khan-el-Khalili. She records the court proceedings,

"... and then the aforementioned woman (Fatimah) left her house to investigate the assault on her son and she found the girl and her mother . . . and she argued with her and the aforementioned woman (Rabiah) assaulted the Sharifah Fatimah with insults and rebukes and the argument and the fight intensified . . ."(1801-1802).¹¹²

Recorded in the early nineteenth century, the court case contradicts with the idea that in all economic classes urban women were segregated from the public urban spaces . Tucker observes that this evidence of confrontation of the women in the neighborhood spaces offers a marked contrast to the secluded image of sheltered urban women from all stratum of the society. Mobility and access to the public spaces were common among the lower middle class woman in Cairo. The selective elite class urban precedents of the Arab house therefore had the element of gender separation as established by the societal norms. The recognition of the interior looking courtyard type house as the predecessors of the Arab house also contained the recognition of the social system of separation of male and female quarters in the house. What was common in both the Nubian vernacular and the Cairene urban examples apart from the climatic aspect of their interior looking character is also the strict separation between the male and female quarters. The selection of examples was based on a culturally pure and predetermined image of the house. The search for purity not only looked for traditional architectural expression, but also the examples which offer distinct climatic and social justification for their authenticity as traditional types.

¹¹²Judith Tucker in *Women in the nineteenth-century Egypt* observes that the women in the harahs or in the neighbourhood units were very much a part of the social institutions like the guilds. Within this quarters where family, social and economic life revolved around the cluster of house, women were active in reciprocal arrangements and quarrels as seen in the court case. pp.106

The Thematic Importance of the Courtyard in the Arab House

"The tall tenement building or rab" is ... a specialty of Cairo... the rab' is a kind of a furnished hotel where up to ten or fifteen apartments can be rented, each lodging up to ten people... Rarely does it have a courtyard.... the shops and warehouses for merchandise frequently occupy the ground level."¹¹³

André Raymond in
"The Rab': A Type of Collective Housing in Cairo during
the Ottoman Period."

"In a sense there is a transposition of the courtyard house, in which we have the courtyard, two eyvans and the loggia. This provided the occupant with the different kind of climate which he required.... With urbanization this has been altered. The center part of the courtyard was covered and the loggias which were not demolished, were put somewhere on the courtyard to catch the north breeze."¹¹⁴

Hassan Fathy's response to Raymond
in the Aga Khan Award Seminar entitled
Architecture as Symbol and Self Identity

The dialogue between André Raymond and Hassan Fathy in the fourth Aga Khan Seminar entitled *Architecture as Symbol and Self-Identity* shows the importance that Fathy attached to the existence of the courtyard as central to his definition of the Arab house. Raymond points to certain collective type of dwelling that Fathy excludes from his discussion of the precedents of the Arab house. In his discussion of a lesser known type of tenement house 'Rab', André Raymond shows the limitation of the singular definition of courtyard type Arabo - Islamic house. This specimen of collective dwelling of Ottoman period as Raymond points out had its precedent in the Mamluk period and goes back to the middle of the fifteenth century.¹¹⁵ As textual evidences suggest examples of the rab' type are found in Fustat and Cairo at a much earlier date. What is relevant for the discussion is the absence of the courtyard as a major architectural element in this type of Cairene house. Raymond through his example of this prevailing type of the Cairene house opposes the notion of the courtyard and the centralized arrangement as essential characteristic of the Arab house.

As André Raymond pointed out, one of the medieval Cairene dwelling types was the rab' which provided accommodation to a considerable proportion of the Cairene population during

¹¹³ Proceedings of The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Seminar Four, "Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World" pp.55-61

¹¹⁴ ibid pp.62

¹¹⁵ Laila Ali Ibrahim, "Middle Class Living Unit in Mamluk Cairo : Architecture and Terminology" in AARP, Dec 1978 pp 24-31.

the Ottoman period.¹¹⁶ The parallel studies by Laila Ali Ibrahim also shows the existence of the *Rab* 'type' in the Mamluk Cairo. Basing their research on endowments documents or *waqf* from the 15th and 16th century and archival documents of religious courts or *mahkama* of the 18th century both the researches shows the fact that *Rab* type of multiunit dwellings housed a considerable portion of middle and lower middle class population of Cairo. Raymond located forty six *Rabs* in Ottoman Cairo (Fig. 44) while Ibrahim concludes that a vast majority of the middle class population lived in this dwelling type. In medieval Cairo, the *rab* ' type of middle class housing units formed multiunit complexes (Fig.45, 46&47). Most commonly the living units were built over commercial constructions called *wakala*, *khan*, and *funduq* . This lower commercial portion was separated from the living apartments above by the existence of an exclusive system of vertical access. This was mainly an extroverted type of dwelling looking out onto the streets. The inner court, though necessary for ventilation was mostly unpaved and surrounded by the service facilities. Thus the courtyard hardly had any importance in this type of residential complex. Except for the *maqad* or loggia in certain houses, less important units opened on to the courtyard. Such collection of living apartments are characterized by their verticality and contained duplex or triplex apartment units. Each unit usually had its own private roof terrace or *muhazzar* ¹¹⁷ Thus rather than looking into the courtyard the units looked on to the street with the circulation facing the courtyard. The courtyard was not the central spatial element in the *rab* ' type residences.¹¹⁸

With his study on the collective Ottoman residential unit Raymond questions the importance that is assigned to the courtyard in the recent definition of the Arab house. He states,

...The *rab* of Cairo does not correspond to what is considered the traditional dwelling in Islamic region. This is supposed to display certain well known characteristic: the segregation of the family secured by the isolation of the house at the end of a blind alley and an introverted orientation of the residence marked by an interior courtyard and the absence of opening on the exterior. Here one may pass from *social* and *climatic* consideration to proposition of a *metaphysical* nature: for example, the interior courtyard (*samawi*) is the central element through which communication with the universe can be realized (The "celestial" courtyard).
119

¹¹⁶ André Raymond in the Aga Khan Seminar proceedings

¹¹⁷ See Laila Ali Ibrahim, in "Middle Class Living Units in Mamluk Cairo : Architectura and Terminology" in AARP, Dec 1978. discusses the existence of the *muhazzar* as the walled private roof terrace accompanying each living apartemnt of the Mamluk *Rab*'. She makes this point in relation to her argument that these residential units stretched vertically and not horizontally around a courtyard.

¹¹⁸ Laila Ali Ibrahim in " Up-to-date concept of traditional Cairene living units", *Ekistics* 287, 1981.

¹¹⁹ André Raymond in the seminar proceedings.

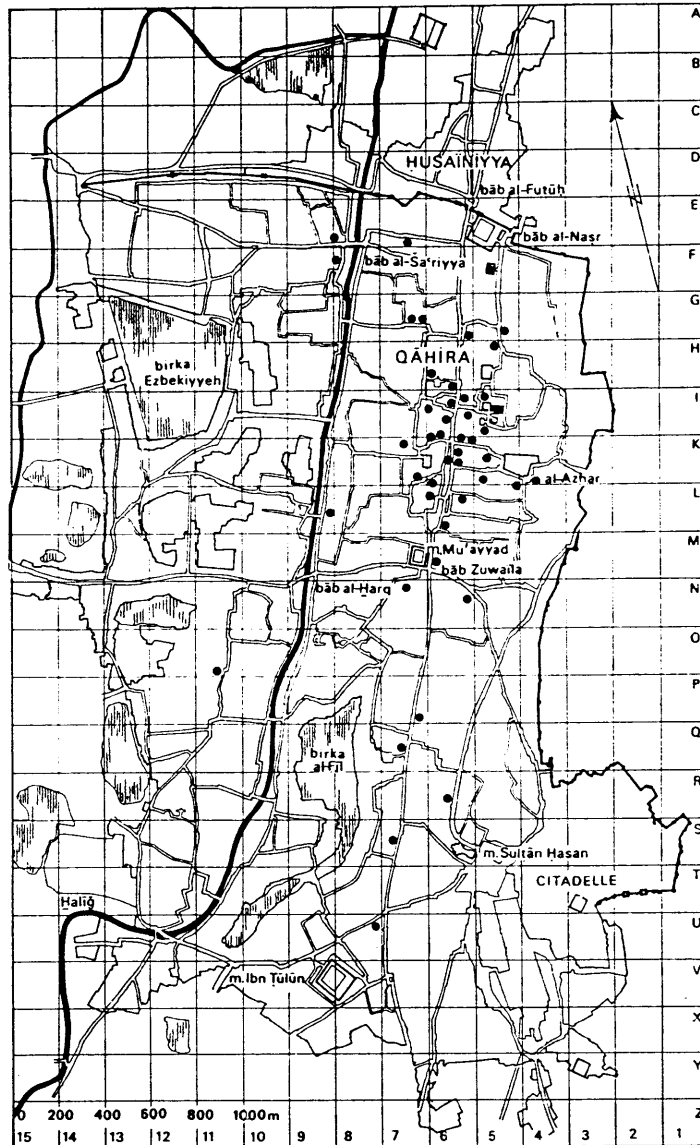


Fig. 44 Map showing the location of the Rab's in Cairo

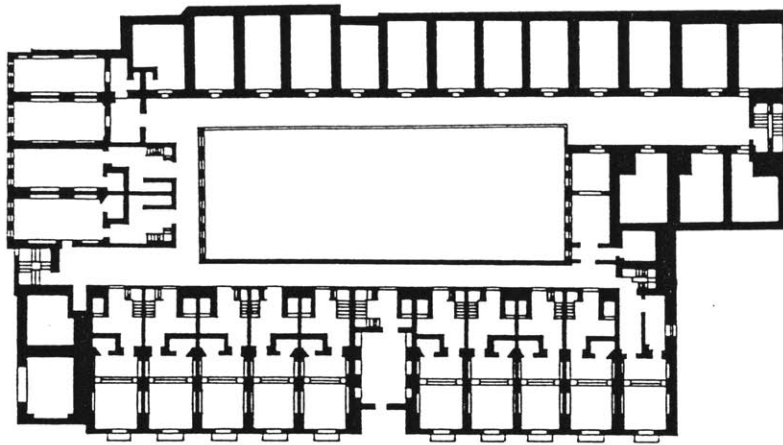


Fig. 46 Plan Wikala al Qayt Bay (1480)

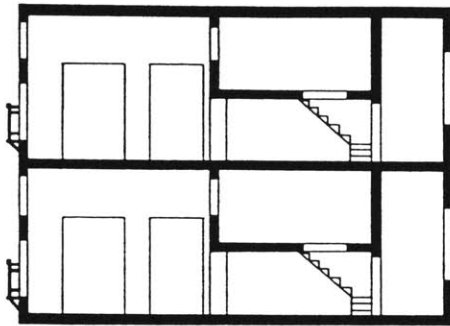


Fig. 45 Two Stories of Duplexes
in Wikala al Qayt Bay (1480)

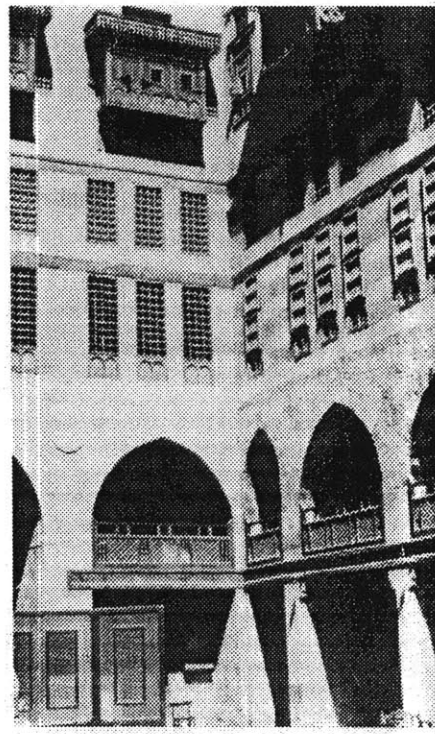


Fig. 47 Rab' of Wikala Al Ghuri,
Cairo (1504 -5)

Raymond's discussion of the *rab'* in the Ottoman Cairo raises an important theoretical issue of the recent discourse on Islamic architecture. By his research on the *rab'* he questions the assumption of courtyard being the omnipresent element in the Cairene house. The important point for our discussion is that it shows the manner in which the presence of the courtyard is rationalized with emphasis on various aspects of environment, religion and societal norms in the recent discourse.

Hassan Fathy's response to Andre' Raymond's paper clearly shows the emphasis he places on the courtyard in his definition of the Arab house. Fathy implies that the courtyard is one of the main defining element of the Arab house. It is considered not only as a traditional motif but also as an environmentally valid spatial element which has contemporary relevance. Fathy argues that the covered of the Cairene houses is an expression of the courtyard of the houses under changed urban situation.¹²⁰ Fathy connects this prototypical arrangement with the examples from the reconstructed plans of houses at Fustat from 10th century and one of the remaining example the *Ad Dardiri*, from 12th century Cairo. In addition to these Egyptian examples Fathy draws examples from Palace of Okhaider in Iraq and house in Tunis.¹²¹ This decontextualization of the precedents is directed towards establishing a common Arab heritage in terms of geographical territoriality. Collection of the examples of the or courtyard from diverse sources implies a commonality of origin - Fathy's search for roots of Arab culture.

Hazem I. Sayed, has argued that the sitting alcove in the 12th century Fustat house had been misinterpreted by the scholars as *iwans*. He refereed to the work of Solomon Goitein as an exception, as he correctly interprets the space as *majlis*, basing his observation on a Geniza document from 1190 A. D. This document describes the Fustat house as containing a large with two majlises opposite to each other. This historical evidence contradicts with the standard explanation of the iwan being an essential element of the ensemble. Sayed further explains that *majlis*, an Arabic word from the root *jalasa* meaning a seat, a place for sitting or a gathering of people has been misinterpreted by the scholars as the solely as an act of gathering. Sayed also distinguishes the iwan from the majlis depending on the degree of enclosure, where the *majlis* is more closed and private than the *iwans*. The definitions of *iwan* and *majlis* cannot be used interchangeably.¹²²

¹²⁰ In *The Arab House in the Urban Setting: Past, Present and Future*, Fathy relates the lower floor level and the higher ceiling height of the Dorqaa as an expression of the courtyard. The dome covering the hall, he states is the symbol of the sky.

¹²¹ *ibid* pp.3

¹²² See Hazem I. Sayed's Ph.d dissertation "The Rab' in Cairo: A Window on Mamluk Architecture and Urbanism", M.I.T 1987, specially in Chapter 5, "The majlis vs. the iwan" pp.130-135.

The interiority of the courtyard as expressed by the courtyard or the is a recurring theme in the representation of the Arab house by Fathy. It is represented as the essential element of the Arab dwelling. The cultural dimension of the courtyard is strengthened with cosmological and theological symbolism in discussing the courtyard. Two basic thesis is presented in Fathy's depiction of the courtyard i) The climatological thesis and ii) The cosmological thesis. In a latter publication of Hassan Fathy titled "Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture" the climatic thesis initially presented in his two papers has been elaborately analyzed with relevant climatological data and scientific theorizing. At the same time the courtyard is established with a parallel metaphysical explanation.

The Cosmological Thesis

The courtyard as a cosmic symbol is the metaphysical dimension of Fathy's depiction of the Arab house. Diametrically the opposite of the rigorous scientific analysis of the climatological justification this overromanticized version ties Fathy back to the larger context of Pan Arabism. It attaches an ahistorical and acontextual value to the courtyard of the Arab house. The recognition of the courtyard as the persistent spatial element implies a continuity with the early examples of the Arab house . It attempts to establish a cultural continuity diachronically from the 10th century to the present time. At the same time it establishes a synchronic supranational territorial identity by referring to the commonality in the spatial principles of houses in the Middle Eastern countries. Offering an abstract notion of the cosmological symbolism, Fathy states,

"It is, like the dome, part of a microcosm that parallels the order of the universe itself. In this symbolic pattern, the four sides of the courtyard represent the four columns that carry the dome of the sky. The sky itself roofs the courtyard and is reflected in the customary fountain in the middle. "¹²³

Fathy consistently uses this cosmological metaphor in describing both the rural and the urban dwellings., amalgamated in the term the Arab house. So the cosmic symbolism is used as a way of authenticating a unitary Arab domestic architecture - peasant and landowners ; urban and rural. These particularities of the different context is unified through the use of symbolism. Cosmological symbolism is thus seen as belonging to the Arab culture , evolving from the ancient theological belief ,

¹²³See *Architecture for the Poor* pp.57

" It is not by hazard that the Arab used such cosmic symbolism in his architecture. The idea of mirroring the sky in a water basin goes back to ancient time, before the Arabs. The Babylonian priests installed such basin on top of the ziggurats to reflect the dome of the sky... "124

The mention of Babylonian ziggurat in Fathy reinforces the territorial identity Fathy consistently tries to achieve. The reference to Babylon (the present day Iraq) speaks about a common heritage that is shared by the civilizations within the same geographical boundary. Fathy through such example from the Middle Eastern countries tries to accentuate the common architectural tradition.

The use of abstract symbolism to establish the traditional aspect of the Islamic world is not rare in the recent scholarship on Islamic architecture. One of the main protagonist of such a scholarly tradition is Sayyed Hossain Nasr with disciples in architectural theory Nader Ardalan, T. Burckhardt and Keith Critchlow.¹²⁵ The overt use of abstract spiritual and theological symbolism to establish Islamic architecture as an ahistorical and timeless tradition is predominant in this school of thought.¹²⁶ The Islamic neo-traditionalist school uses cosmic symbolism to establish the essentially timeless value in Islamic architecture. In these texts the court yard is similarly related with cosmological meaning. Though Hassan Fathy establishes the notion of the Arab house as opposed to a more universalized definition of the Islamic house, he shares this manner of representing the house through cosmic symbolism.

The Climatological Thesis

The courtyard with its spatial dependencies is explained as the quintessential climatic regulator for the Arab house. The courtyard in the Arab house is described as a means of regulating the heat and glare of the desert climate. It is seen as offering a natural and effective cooling system. In the hot arid climatic region the air temperature drops considerably at night by radiation. Between the night and day the temperature change is 10°-20° C. During the day the warm air rises up and during the night the cool air is retained in the courtyard which is

¹²⁴ See *The Qaa of the Cairene Arab House* pp.135

¹²⁵ The neo-traditionalist school of architectural theory includes N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtier "Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture", K. Critchlow, *The Islamic Pattern*. T. Burckhardt *Art of Islam : Language and Meaning*. As mentioned by Sibel Bozdogan in an unpublished paper "Modern Architecture and the project of Cultural Decolonization" presented at ACSA General Meeting March, 1993.

described as the reservoir of cool air. With this basic thesis of climatological advantage of the courtyard it is established scientifically as the universal solution for houses across the Arab region which according to Fathy includes all the Arabo-Islamic countries.

In Fathy's opinion, due to the hostility of the climate the Arab houses are closed at the lower part. Thus the rooms surrounding the courtyard create a hollow inverted cube which makes the courtyard as reservoir of cool air. The fountain in the middle of the central space (which a feature of the elite class reception space) is seen as a humidifying and cooling device. The open loggia or *takhtaboosh* at the courtyard level is also considered as facilitating air movement into the courtyard through its filigree keeping it cool and well ventilated. The *qa'a* is considered as the urban derivation of the courtyard space shows this climatic sophistication, which through the convective air flow cools the interior. Thus cool wind admitted through the wind catcher or the *malqaf* conditioning the internal temperature escapes through the high ceiling of the *doorqaa*.

This climatological thesis offers a highly generalized climatic explanation. It starts with the basic assumption that all the houses are situated in a same surrounding context. Speaking of the generic type it attempts to encompass the range from the isolated desert rural abode to urban residences situated in tight urban fabric. The justification of the various climatic devices oscillate back and forth between vernacular and urban examples. Thus the environmental controlling devices like *malqaf*, *takhtaboosh* and *mushrabiya* are seen as belonging to the whole range of courtyard houses, which fails to take into account the particularities of different situations.

In the overall depiction of the courtyard, the cosmological and climatological rationalization both point to Fathy's assertion of a unified Arab expression of domestic architecture. While the climatic commonality refers to a shared climatic zone, the cosmological symbolism tries to appeal to a shared intellectual tradition which shows the "astronomical bent"¹²⁷ of the Arabs. While one is more scientifically rational and universal, the metaphysical aspect is romanticized and abstract.

¹²⁷ Hassan Fathy *Architecture for the Poor* p.55

The *Malqaf* and the *Mushrabiya*

Along with the centrality of the courtyard, Fathy finds the lattice window or *mushrabiya* and the wind catcher or the *malqaf* add cultural authenticity to the concept of the Arab house. Like the courtyard these are also shown as having climatic advantages while contributing to the image of the traditional Arab dwelling that Fathy had perpetuated. The depiction of the *mushrabiya* is associated with both the climatic rationalization and social validity. The *malqaf* on the other hand is emphasized to explain the environmental sophistication of the house. Together the two significant elements support the interiority of the Arab house.

The *malqaf* is considered as an important traditional element of the Arab house. Along with the courtyard or and *mushrabiya*, the *malqaf* constitutes the complete climatic control system. It is the wind shaft rising from the roof of the reception hall in the Cairene medieval residences. In the traditional houses the *malqaf* admitted the cool northern breeze facilitating the air flow in the domestic spaces in tight urban fabric. Apart from its climatic function, the *malqaf* in Fathy's description is seen as a shared traditional architectural element among Islamic countries. The traditionality of the *malqaf* is described by an image of a Pharaonic house of Nebu Amen from a painting on his tomb from 1300 B.C. (Fig.48a) Fathy uses this image in his representation of the Arab house as a way of establishing the historical importance of the element. The *malqaf* thus adds historical value to the image of the Arab house. While the scientific and empirical analysis vindicates the contemporary relevance, the historical reference establishes the *malqaf* as a non western element from an Egyptian context. In *Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture* Fathy also uses the examples of the wind catchers from the Sind province in Pakistan, Yazd in Iran and from Dubai, U.A.E. (Figs.48b,49,50). The *mushrabiya* like the *malqaf* is represented as performing a double role. It is described as having both climatic advantage and providing seclusion to the female members of the houses in the Arab region. Therefore the depiction on one hand tries to scientifically establish the climatological aspects offered by the wooden latticework and on the other hand it is recognized as a screening device to maintain the visual separation for the woman. Fathy's description of the climatic function of the *mushrabiya* is discussed in an elaborated manner in *Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture*, which is a continuation of the climatic thesis put forward in his earlier publication. The variety of climatic functions that the *mushrabiya* performs is discussed in this book. The control of air temperature, glare reduction, humidification are the important climatic aspects of the lattice work that are analyzed in this book. The glare control is considered one of the main climatic role that the *mushrabiya* plays. With a series of visual analysis, the *mushrabiya* is seen as reducing both the high intensity direct sunlight and the low intensity indirect glare. The sizes of the

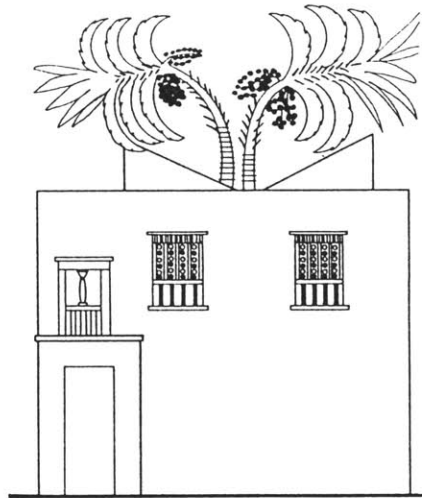


Fig. 48a. *Malqaf* of the pharaonic house of Neb - Amen, 19th Dynasty (c. 1300 B.C)

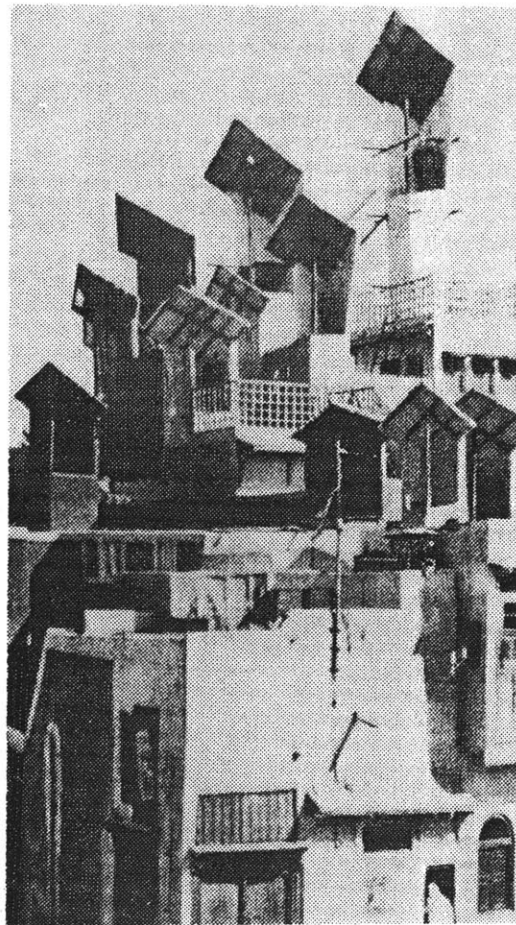


Fig. 48b. *Malqaf* in Sind Province, Pakistan

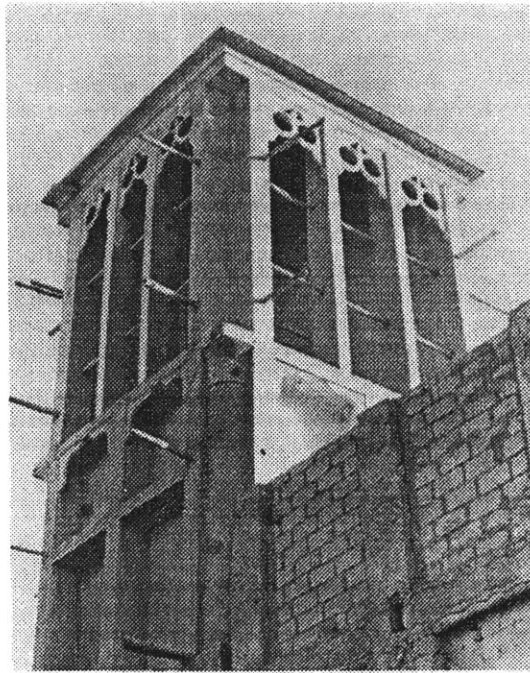


Fig. 49 *Badgir* or wind towers in Dubai, U.A.E

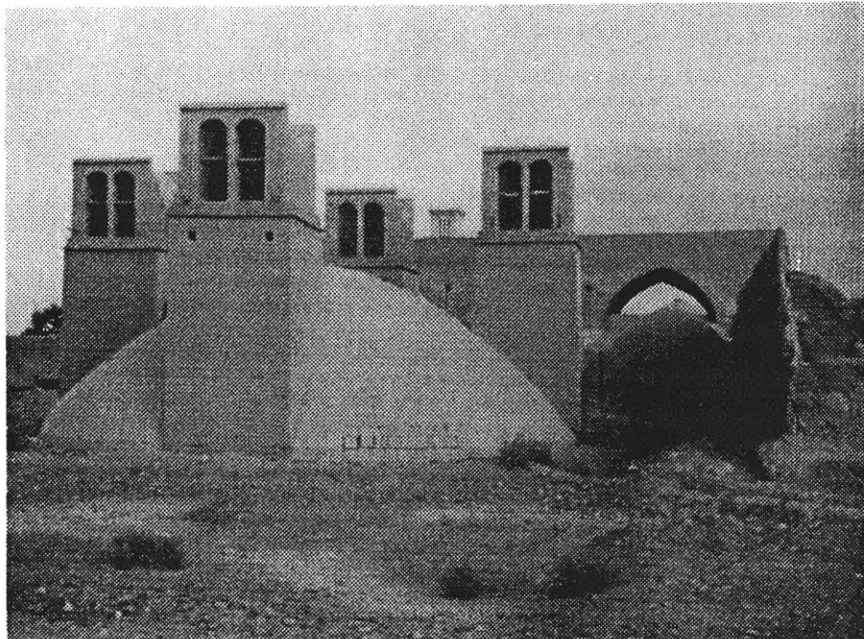


Fig. 50 Badgirs in Yazd, Iran

interstices and the balusters of the lattices are seen as intercepting the direct solar radiation creating a deemming effect in the interior.(Figs.51, 52 & 53) The cooling and humidifying function of the *mushrabiya* is explained as being performed by the lattice work. The wood of the lattice retains, absorbs and releases considerable amount of moisture . Thus the warm air passing through the lattice is seen as cooling and humidifying the incoming air.

In addition to the climatic study, the *mushrabiya* is seen as performing important social function of creating visual obstacle between the exterior and the interior of the house. Parallel to the methodical empirical analysis the visual separation of the *mushrabiya* is discussed with reference to the social system. Fathy states,“. . . The mushrabiya serves an important social function: it ensures privacy from the outside for the inhabitants while at the same time allowing them to view the outside through the screen. . .”. Initially in his book “Architecture for the Poor”, Fathy explained,

The function of providing a view is discharged by the mushrabiya, a kind of oriole window built out from the wall in which is fixed a lattice work screen of turned wood which suitably tames and softens the harsh light before letting into the room. Behind this mushrabiya the ladies of the house may sit and comfortably watch the street, in *perfect seclusion* . . .¹²⁸(Italic added)

Fathy’s description of the mushrabiya tries to balance between the traditional role of providing seclusion to the women and the scientific justification for its contemporary relevance. Both the environmental justification and the reference to tradition, establishes the *mushrabiya* as an element belonging exclusively to the non Western Arab societies. The nonwestern character is highlighted through the reference to the seclusion of woman. Thus the *mushrabiya* is seen as an element speaking about an exclusive identity of the Arab house. In establishing this identity, Fathy recognizes the traditional segregative connotation that is attached to the lattice window while establishing it as a valued traditional element. In his attempt to authenticate the traditionality of the *mushrabiya*, Fathy stresses the traditional segregated role of women. The Arab house thesis is thus based on the acceptance of the secluded role of the Arab women while trying to achieve an exclusive non-Western identity.

¹²⁸ ibid p.50

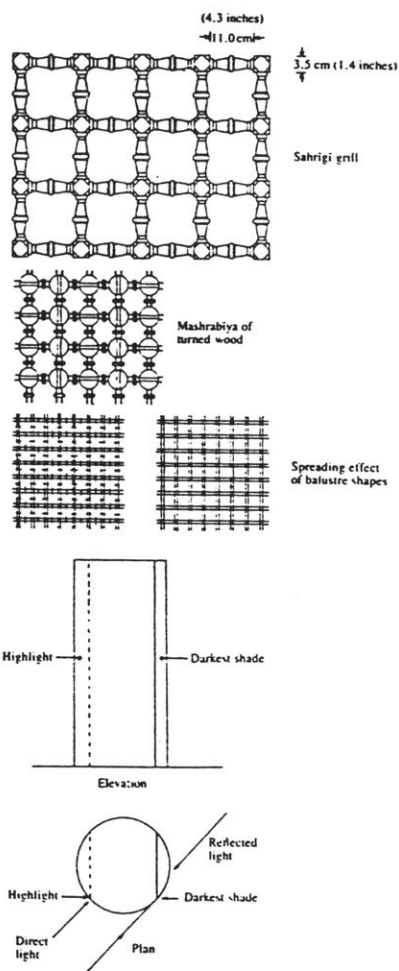


Fig. 52 Diagrammatic analysis of mushrabiya

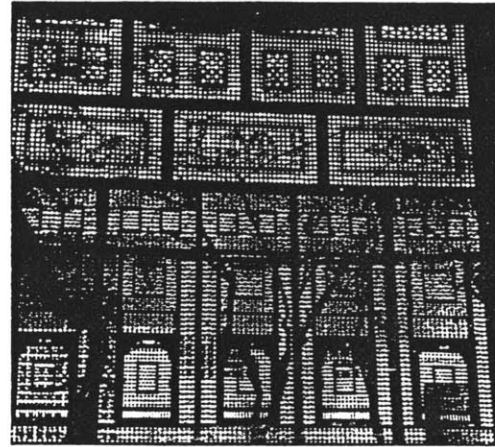


Fig. 51 Mushrabiya of Souhami House - Photographic study

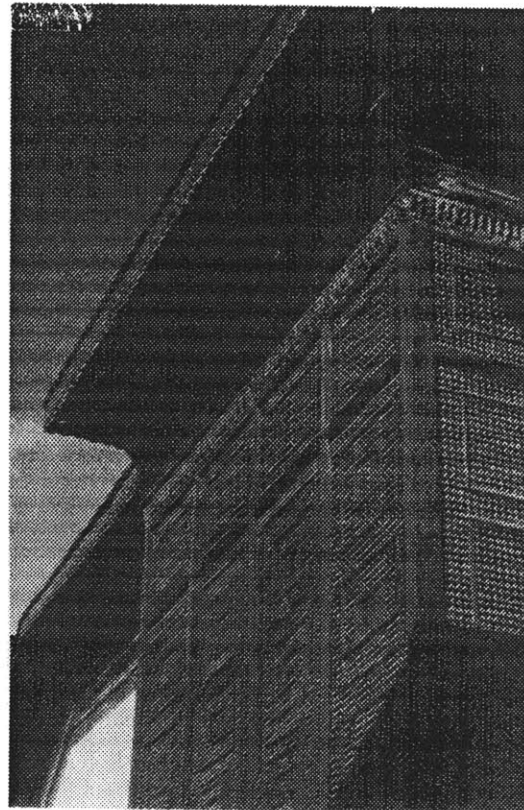


Fig. 53 Mushrabiya as privacy device

The Non -Western Image of the Cairene House

The image of the Cairene house as constructed by Hassan Fathy is based on the elements which speak of the exclusivity from Western domestic architecture. His choice of traditional spatial elements like the secluded courtyard, *mushrabiya* and *malqaf* asserts anti-Westernism, which is a recurring theme of Fathy's philosophy. In the context of post colonial time, it is a part of a larger cultural agenda of searching for anti-western national identity. At one level, the use of the assertive term "Arab house" speaks about the oppositional identity of the domestic architecture that Fathy tries to perpetuate. At another level the discordance becomes evident when the anti Western identity in *Architecture for the Poor* is published in two Western languages, English and French without a parallel publication in Arabic. The question of audience becomes important which points towards the westernized elite and the western architectural press. Indian psychologist Asish Nandy recognizes this post-colonial anti Western rhetoric as an aftermath and reaction to colonialism. Calling it a form of *official dissent* Nandy writes, "It is predictable today to be anti colonial in away which is specified and promoted by the modern world view . . . even when in opposition the dissent remains predictable and controlled."¹²⁹ Fathy's philosophy of Arab house as a part of a larger context of post colonial search is based on the concept of anti westernism which is at the same time a reaction and response to the West. For Fathy indigenous culture meant the aspects of the Arab culture which has remained uncontaminated by Western colonial presence. In his interpretation this means belonging to an era which is pre-colonial or to a region which did not experience direct colonial influence on its architectural expression. The precedents for the Arab house are thus chosen from the early 10th century Fustat until the late Ottoman era which directly precedes the French expedition in 1798. The urban and rural examples of houses from pre colonial Cairo and rural Nubia show response to the social system of gender segregation. The interiorized character, separation in spatial arrangement, the articulations of windows , the access system are responses to the strict gender separation. From the Ottoman period, only the elite courtyard type residences were chosen which had this distinct system of gender segregation. Collective units were excluded because as they contradicted with the basic theme of interiority of the Arab house. The emphasis on interiority, and the courtyard as its architectural manifestation had been rationalized by essential climatological thesis occasionally supported by cosmic symbolism. Evolving from the same ideology of anti-Westernism while focusing on the social system to establish Arab solidarity Fathy takes recourse to feminine symbolism. Though Fathy claims that the courtyard is not an out come of the need of privacy, he emphasizes its feminine

¹²⁹ Asish Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* Preface,xii

character. The interiority is defined as feminine and it is related to the connotation of the peacefulness and sacrality. Both the scientific and the romanticized explanation of the courtyard speak about an Arab identity recognizing the seclusion of woman as an acceptable social practice. The appropriation of the spatial elements which had the connotation of gender seclusion in the representation the Arab house shows the recognition. Underlying the overt climatic rationalization is a recognition of the seclusion of the female as a traditional custom of Arab society. Such recognition of gender segregation as interspersed in the climatic thesis is evident in the mention of female privacy. The reference to the courtyard as the domain of Arab woman is a way of alluding to the Islamic social system of gender seclusion. The interiority offered by the courtyard in authenticating the Arabism of the house recognizes and utilizes the limited traditional role of woman. The social system of gender seclusion is given positive value in the anti-Western identity search for the Cairene house in Hassan Fathy.

The Persistent Metaphor:

Internalization of Colonial Symbols in Post-Colonial Representation

*"Over there is like here, neither better nor worse. But I am from here, just as the date palm standing in the courtyard of our house has grown in our house and not in anyone else's. The fact that they came to our land, I know not why, does that mean that we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country, just as many people throughout history left many countries. The railways, ships, hospitals, factories and schools will be ours and we'll speak their language without either a sense of guilt or a sense of gratitude. Once again we shall be as we were - ordinary people - and if are we lies we shall be lies of our own making."*¹³⁰

The colonial and the post-colonial descriptions of the house display a strong thematic semblance. The two canonical representations, the colonial depiction by Lane and the post-colonial definition by Fathy focused on the interiority of the house. Courtyard and *mushrabiya* received the primary attention in both the representations as a way of focusing on its interiority. *Mushrabiya*, the picturesque element of the traditional Cairene house reinforced the basic theme - the introverted character of the courtyard house. The introverted character of the house spoke about the *difference* of the Cairene residences from the Western houses. Both Lane and Fathy in depicting the house focused on the exclusive aspects and set it as an *Other* to the Western houses. Highlighting the exclusive elements of domestic architecture the two canon of representations were representing the differences between the Eastern and the Western societal norms. One of the main component of such difference is the gender segregation in the Cairene society. Woman by the established social norms were secluded in some genre of Cairene and Nubian houses and the courtyard, *mushrabiya*, along with other forms of spatial control facilitated such seclusion. By emphasizing on these spatial elements both Lane and Fathy represented the aspect of segregating genders in the Cairene society. From his Western ethnographic background, supported by the 'Society of Useful knowledge' Lane selected elements which were related to the Egyptian social system. Therefore his depiction of the house was based on the intention to focus on distinct social practices that would establish the cultural difference between the East and the West. The culturally biased colonial representation of Lane, attached derogatory connotation to the depiction of the Oriental elements. As discussed before, the emphasis on the wooden lock in the description of the Cairene house shows the cultural bias in Lane. The detailed description of its structure and mechanism is a recurring example in Lane and in the successive representations of the Cairene house. The detail of the lock became important in colonial representation as it provided an opportunity to comment on its technological inferiority and on the lack of scientific rationality of the Eastern people. Hence

¹³⁰ Tayib Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* p.49.

the wooden lock became important with the courtyard and the *mushrabiya* in the colonial representation.

In his search for Arab identity, in the larger context of Pan Arabism Fathy concentrated on architectural elements which would help define the Arab identity. The important elements were described in terms of their climatic appropriateness. Climate in the description of the Arab house thus became important as it established a notion of a shared Arab territoriality and a reversal of the colonial thesis of scientific irrationality. Fathy's essential environmental justification is thus an effort to establish an architectural expression of anti Western Arabism. With this background, *malqaf* became an important element in his representation. Supportive scientific research reinforced its climatic validity. The importance allotted to the *malqaf* thus indicates the scientific rationality of the traditional Arab builders. Hence the *malqaf* gained importance in the post-colonial representation.

However, the Courtyard and the *mushrabiya* remained constant in Lane and Fathy. Looking at the Cairene house from different historical vantage points, Lane and Fathy arrived at the same image of the Cairene house while trying to establish the cultural *differences* between the Eastern and the Western cultures . However the persistent focus on the interiority of the Cairene house was paralleled by a reversal of connotation. In Lane, the courtyard and *mushrabiya* were represented with the underlying message of the captivity of the Egyptian woman. In Fathy the same elements were represented as having essential social advantages . The segregative social role of the Cairene house as presented by the colonial description was reversed in Fathy's depiction as offering privacy to the Arab woman. The connotation attached to the characteristic elements through which both Lane and Fathy depicted the Cairene house is related to their respective colonial and post-colonial agenda of representation. The colonial derogatory connotation was reversed into post colonial exaltative connotation while speaking about the constant theme of interiority of the Cairene house. While this inwardness in Lane represented the segregative social practice, in Fathy it represented social appropriateness. Post colonial representation appropriated and reversed the colonial structure to achieve its own definition of identity.

With reference to the search for identity of *exclusivism* and *separatism*, Edward Said analyzes this reversal of colonial definition in the post colonial time . Said's example of the concept of *négritude* finds its parallel in the *reclamation* of its identity in the decolonized Third World. Such reclamation is created by reversing the colonial denigrative thesis to glorify post-colonial identity, Said observes:

"If blacks had once been stigmatized and given inferior status to whites , then it has since become necessary not to deny blackness, and not to aspire to whiteness, but to accept and celebrate blackness, to give it the dignity of poetic as well as metaphysical status. Thus negritude acquired positive Being where before it had been a mark of degradation and inferiority"¹³¹

Therefore the courtyard of environmental bliss is an appropriation and reversal of the courtyard of segregation. The reclamation of the post-colonial identity from the vestiges of a colonial derogatory representation is not a rare phenomenon in the post colonial world. The internalization of the representation of the colonized and its subversion to achieve a homogeneous post colonial identity led to the anticolonial liberation struggles in many Third World countries. However at the latter stages of the post colonial era, the persistence of the same colonial symbols alludes to the possible existence of some form of neocolonialism. The neocolonialism can be seen as the existence of a power hierarchy in the decolonized society evolving out of cultural, religious or nationalist fundamentalism. As an aftermath of colonization, these internal power structure attempted to reuse the colonial symbols to serve their own ideology. The internal power structures attempted to replace the colonizers in a new hierarchical social system which is rooted in an exploitative ideology. Said observes,". . . instead of liberation after decolonization one simply gets the old colonial structure replicated in new national terms."¹³²The persistence of the colonial structure serves a new internal system of power hierarchy.

The cultural orthodoxy which tries to promote a post-colonial identity is a reaction to colonialism. As a response to the prolonged colonial domination the post-colonial societies in defining their identity tried to completely detach themselves from the immediate colonial past. This form of identity is reactive and combative to the West in which everything nonwestern or anti western becomes important. Such reactive identity however internalizes the colonial symbols in representation of 'self'. Ashish Nandy explains this internalization of colonial structure stating, ". . . the second form of colonialism, the one which six generation of the Third world have learnt to view as a prerequisite for their liberation. . . it releases forces which leads colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. . ."¹³³ Post-colonial representation of 'self' with the internalized colonial structure paradoxically defines itself as a constant opposition to colonialism.

¹³¹ Edward Said, "The Politics of Knowledge", *Raritan* p. 22

¹³² Edward Said, "Yeats and Decolonization", in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*. p.74

¹³³ Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy : Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* p.xi

In 1953 an eminent Egyptian writer and scholar Ahmad Amin published the *Dictionary of Egyptian Manners, Customs and Expressions*¹³⁴ which closely followed Lane's *Manners and Customs*. The illustrations of the different aspects of Egyptian society are directly reproduced from the wood cut illustrations of Lane's publication of 1836(Fig.54&55). Ahmad Amin acknowledgment of his debt to Edward Lane's "Manners and Customs" shows a conscious appropriation of the colonial description. The post colonial writer's attempt to document the manners and custom of his own society depending on a Western observer's description is intriguing. The reason for adopting Lane's description by Amin can be found in Leila Ahmed's comment on the authenticity of Lane's description of Egypt,

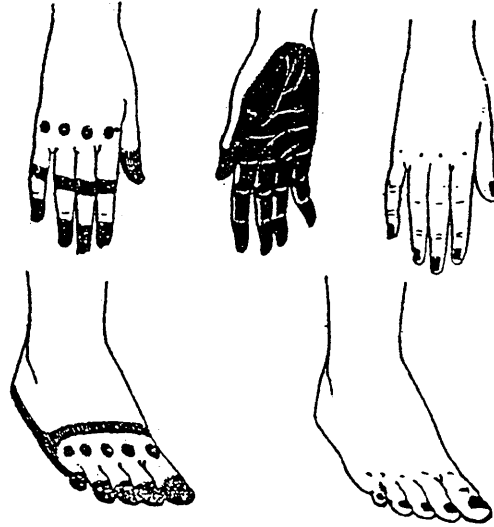
"Lane saw Egypt just before it was thrown open to Western influence, and consequently recorded the Egyptian scene at a moment when the society, for the last time, visibly expressed the ideas inherent in its religious and moral beliefs, and when the now shattered relationship between the latter and the public and private social behavior was still direct and explicit. . ."¹³⁵

It is evident from the comment that Lane's *Manners and Customs* was considered as a source of pure account of the pre colonial Egyptian society. His account served as a source of information of the Medieval Cairene society which had been uncontaminated by intervention of Westernization. A search for a pure Egyptian culture is evident in Amin's direct and unquestioned adoption of Lane's account. The paradox remains in the fact that Amin's search for an account of the pure Egyptian society, culminated in an Westerner observer's description of the society. Thus an Egyptian's account depended on the western description to find a nonwestern image of the Egyptian society. It shows the dependency of post colonial representation on the colonial description. The search for roots of culture in Western depictions still characterizes the search for self identity. The recent architectural publication of *UIA: International Architect* in 1985, while featuring *An Introduction to Islamic Cairo* published Lane's account of the Cairene house. The note from the editors at the beginning of the republished piece recognizes Lane's account as a dependable detailed description of the Cairene house. It notes,

"Edward William Lane's "The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians" is, to this day, one of the most readable accounts of the social and cultural fabric of Egyptian daily life in the

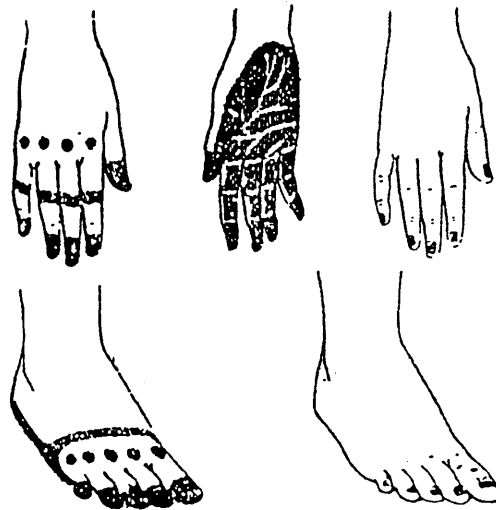
¹³⁴ Ahmad Amin as cited in Leilah Ahmed, *Edward W Lane* p. 120 I would like to thank Panayiota Pyla for letting me read her unpublished paper "Etnographic Authority on Matter Oriental: Edward W. Lane'1993.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, pp120



Hands and Feet stained with Hhen'na.

Fig. 54 Edward W. Lane's Woodcut drawing in *Manners and Customs* (1836)



كف عني (اظهر ليله الخامس ٣٤٩)

Fig. 55 Woodcut drawing in Ahmad Amin' *Dictionary of Egyptian Manners, Customs and Expressions* (1953)

early 19th century . . . Lane begins his survey of the Egyptians with the detailed description of a typical Cairene house - which we publish here as a complement to the other texts dealing with the house type"¹³⁶

It is therefore not a coincidence that Fathy's description of the Cairene house closely resembles Lane's description. In both cases, the establishment of identity, which is Western and anti-Oriental in case of Lane and anti-Western in Fathy uses the same interiority of the house to serve opposing cultural identity. The establishment of identity in both the representations uses the traditional social system of seclusion of woman in the house. Looking at the house from different cultural viewpoint, these two canons of representations accept the limited domesticated role of woman. Along with the continuous appropriation of the architectural and spatial elements of the Cairene house which traditionally facilitated gender segregation, the continual assertion of the metaphorical woman - house association asserts such tendency in both representations. The context of post colonial appropriation and reversal of feminine symbol speaks about the affirmation of gender segregation as Lane and Fathy states:

"The principal aim of the architect is to render the house as private as possible particularly that part of it which is inhabited by the woman. . .The hhareem or the female of the house have distinct apartments allotted to them and into these apartments (which as well as the persons to whom they are appropriated are called the hhareem), no males are allowed to enter."¹³⁷

Edward William Lane (1836)

"The inward looking Arab house, open to the calm of the sky made beautiful by the feminine element of water, self contained and peaceful, the deliberate antithesis of the harsh world of work, war fare and commerce is the domain of woman. The Arabic name *sakan* to denote the house is related to the word *sakina* peaceful and holy, while the word *hareem* which means woman is related to *harem*, *sacred* which denotes the family living quarters."¹³⁸

Hassan Fathy (1973)

The two quotations from Lane and Fathy show their respective cultural agendas, in the colonial and the post-colonial contexts. The thematic focus on the interiority of the house finds different expressions in the two depictions. The *objective* ethnographic description of Lane as a way of establishing the superior Western identity focused on the aspect of gender segregation of the Cairene house. The use of feminine analogy for the house became a way of authenticating the

¹³⁶ UIA:International Architect Magazine, Issue 7,1985 pp.10-11

¹³⁷ Edward Lane , *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* pp.29 &181

¹³⁸ Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor* p. 57

segregative aspect. Thus the word *harem* in Lane connotes the seclusion of the Egyptian women and the seclusive aspect defines the main spatial and architectural characteristic of the house. Conversely in Fathy, the word *harem* has the connotations of sacrality and holiness as a way of glorifying the social system of separating the male and the female spaces in the house. The introverted character of the house has been given positive connotations to vindicate the privacy of the Arab woman.

The same etymological roots have been explored by both representations to establish the woman-house association. The metaphorical relationship serves to authenticate two opposing cultural agendas -the denigration of Other to the exaltation of the self. The related reversal of connotation of the woman-house identification the woman traditional role is repeatedly affirmed. While the colonial representation exploits the secluded image of the Egyptian woman to prove their own superior identity, the post colonial identity glorifies and reaffirm the same image to negate the colonial assault. By using the same metaphorical relationship which assigns essentially traditional and domesticated role to the woman, the post colonial tries to "merely revert the colonial thesis to affirm the opposite."¹³⁹ From two different vantage points the two canons of representation tries to perpetuate a secluded existence of the woman. The persistent metaphorical role assigned to woman asserts this oppressive patriarchal ideology from the colonial to the post colonial time.

Therefore the anti-colonial and anti-Western rhetoric of identity is a reaction and derivation of the colonial structure which can serve gender biased forms of power hierarchy within the post colonial society. Nandy thus concludes, ". . . the internal colonialism in turn uses the fact of external threat to legitimize and perpetuate itself."¹⁴⁰ The post colonial representation of the house can serve the social subjugation of woman in perpetuating the traditional and secluded existence. The rhetoric of orthodox cultural identity can oppose woman's participation to the public sphere while at the same time legitimize itself with the contemporary agenda of traditional identity. The traditional interiority of the house can be an expression of post colonial identity of the house and at the same time assert the male dominance by imposing the traditional secluded role on woman. Anti-colonial identity as an opposition and reaction to the Western colonialism can serve to legitimize internal neocolonialism of subjugating woman in the post-colonial society.

¹³⁹ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* p. 237

¹⁴⁰ Ashis Nandy, Preface p. xii

Epilogue

Mustafa Sa'eed in "Season of Migration to the North" represents the image of the post colonial unsettled self that had been created and left behind by the colonial domination. The exclusive identity once constructed by the colonial presence created an Other in Mustafa Sa'eed which he calls a lie - an ideological construct of his own self. Speaking the colonial language, as a product of the colonial education Mustafa Sa'eed sets into a voyage to the land of the colonizers. His intention of vengeance on colonialism which created him as the lie led him to cultural violence : Jean Morris became the Occidental counterpart of the Scheherzad of the Arabian Nights. After a disastrous and violent assertion of the anti- Western post colonial identity in the land of the colonizer, Mustafa Sa'eed orients himself towards his native village to find true and pure self. The return journey towards his pure origin is a reaction to colonialism - a reversal of the earlier journey towards the Victoria Station . In this journey Sa'eed tries to return to the pure origin considered to be lying in his ancestral Sudanese village. In this desire to return is hidden an intention to combat the colonial construction of identity .To obliterate the identity constructed by the colonizers Mustafa Sa'eed searches for an identity of his own construction. An identity that would create new lies.

The post colonial representation of the *self* is a reaction to the colonial construction of the *Other*. In this culturally combative assertion of both identities the social and religious custom of secluding women in home is reaffirmed. The colonial description of Cairene domestic architecture created its thematic focus on the interiority of the house as a way of supporting the colonial thesis of representing the colonized society. Arab woman and Arab house became an opportunity of making commentary on the Islamic social custom in general and Cairene social system in particular. The representation of the apparently neutral artifacts thus carried the underlying message of the cultural inferiority of the Cairene culture. The post colonial *return* to a culturally grounded courtyard type house is a reactive response to the colonial attack on the once colonized culture. The segregative aspect of the culture which became the focus of colonial representation was inverted to support the traditional norms. The post colonial reappropriation of woman's traditional role as a response to the colonial assault on the nonWestern colonized cultures merely inverted the colonial thesis. In this conflict of cultures the woman was trapped into the seclusive traditional role. Fatima Mernissi in her discussion of the subjugation of woman in the post colonial societies states, "Since Western colonizers took over the paternalistic defense of Muslim women's lot, any change in their conditions were seen as concessions to the colonizer. . . women's liberation was readily identified as a surrender to foreign influences"¹⁴¹

The recent discourse on Islamic architecture resonate the colonial and post-colonial thesis in its recognition of the essential separation of the genders in creation of spaces in the Islamic context. It departs from the assumption that gender separation needs to be maintained in order to

¹⁴¹Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil : Male -Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* p. 7

achieve a culturally sensitive Islamic house. In a recent publication entitled, *Expression of Islam in Buildings*, one authors of the article "Woman and Space in Muslim Societies" conclude:

Yet the social segregation of women in Muslim societies is not absolute. Woman as potential object of desire, are to be shielded from the gaze of strange men. Woman are permitted to see the men in question provided they are not seen themselves this particular definition of privacy has produced the quintessential Middle Eastern device of the Mushrabiya. Popularly regarded as a symbol of segregation and exclusion of women from the public, the mushrabiya permits woman at the same time to see but not to be seen.¹⁴²

The validity of traditional architectural elements for maintaining the visual separation between genders is a common theme in the contemporary publications on Islamic architecture. In this manner the interiority of the house is considered as essential to correspond to the social system of gender separation. Architecture image making thus serves to reinforce and validate the social concept. The neo-traditional role of the woman is asserted through perpetuating an image of architecture which has internalized the gender segregative aspect as its basic assumption. How can an architectural image that accepts the gender segregative aspect as its basis define a all encompassing identity of Islamic architecture. As Bozdogan writes " It is not possible to assign an emancipatory mission to architecture and then leave the structure of oppression intact".¹⁴³ In the establishment of an essential image of Islamic, Arab or Arabo-Islamic house the issue of woman's seclusion is accepted uncritically. Moreover it is asserted to establish a traditional image woman. The definition of Arab house in the most recent discussions on Islamic architecture reflects the hierarchically defined role of the male and the females of the Muslim societies. The representation of the Arab house can be a venue of critically assessing the gender hierarchy in the Muslim societies, instead of unquestioningly accepting the traditional spatial system of gender separation. Instead of projecting an ideologically constructed essential image, the representation of the Cairene house can expose and question the gender bias in the Muslim society.

Cornel West defines identity as *a matter of life and death*¹⁴⁴ which reflects the complexity attached to the definition of identity. On the one hand it is a desire to live and survive. Through association and affiliation one defines and protects one's own existence in the world. On

¹⁴² Ismail Serageldine and Afaf Mahfouz, "Women and Space in Islam" in *Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, p.86

¹⁴³ Sibel Bozdogan, "The Aga Khan Award for Architecture: A Philosophy of Reconciliation" in JAE, May 1992.

¹⁴⁴ Cornel West, "A Matter of Life and Death" in October 61, Summer 1992.

the other hand narrowly defined identities lead to cultural and social xenophobia. As a tool in the hands of the powerful, rigidly defined combative identities give rise to fundamentalism , ethnocentrism, radical sexism in many countries and societies across the East West boundaries. Cultural violence in many cases are a direct outcome of this politics of identity, which establishes power hierarchy over the subjugated through the legitimizing label of *Identity*. This reactive identity in the Islamic countries has led to the resurgence of religious and nationalist fundamentalism. The return to the cultural origin in many instances serve an internal structure of oppression and power hierarchy chanting the slogan of traditional identity. The discourse on Islamic architecture thus has an unavoidable responsibility of critically assessing the internal hierarchy of power, perpetuating gender bias before asserting an essential traditional identity.

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